

Iran ready to sign non-aggression pact

DOHA (AFP) — A senior Iranian official has announced for the first time Iran's willingness to sign a non-aggression treaty with all Gulf Arab states in a statement published by a Qatari daily on Saturday. "We are ready to sign a non-aggression treaty with all the countries of the Gulf to boost security in the region," Hussein Sheikholeslam, deputy foreign minister for Africa and the Middle East, told the daily Al Rayy. "The treaty must also stipulate that the countries of the region do not support any aggression carried out by one state against another," he added. But he acknowledged the existence of "some problems with certain countries" within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) stressing that "Iran's relations with Qatar, Kuwait and Oman are good." Iran is currently in dispute with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over three islands in the mouth of the Hormuz Straits which Iran has occupied. At a recent summit the six countries of the GCC, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain, backed the UAE's call for the dispute to be settled by international arbitration.

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Arab rights groups plan network

CAIRO (AFP) — Thirty-three human rights groups working in the Middle East have agreed to set up a network to exchange information, the groups said in a statement on Saturday. The network aims to "enhance the capabilities of human rights organisations to attain and exchange information" as well as "promote solidarity among the various parties in the Arab movement for human rights," the statement said. Thirty-three rights groups met in Cairo to organise the network, proposed by the Arab Organisation for Human Rights, the Arab Institute for Human Rights and the Arab Lawyers' Union.

Iraq sells off stockpiled goods

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The Iraqi government is selling off its stockpiles of electrical goods, carpets and clothes to the public at knock-down prices to offset soaring prices and the effect of U.N. sanctions, officials said Saturday. Household appliances, televisions, refrigerators, air-conditioners, tyres, car batteries, carpets and clothes will all go on sale at 10 per cent lower than market prices, the commerce ministry said. The ministry's director general said he had been ordered to put the goods on sale in Baghdad and other areas by the Iraqi cabinet.

AMU to give Egypt observer status

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) is set to award Egypt observer status in the organisation at its next session, Algerian Foreign Minister Mohammad Saleh Dembri said on Saturday. "The legal procedures to give AMU membership to Egypt as an observer have been completed and will be put to the AMU leadership for approval at their next summit," Mr. Dembri told the Egyptian government daily Al Ahram. Mr. Dembri said the session was to be held in Algiers in late February or early March after the Holy Month of Ramadan, which ends Feb. 20. Cairo asked two years ago to be an observer in the organisation.

One dead in Spanish store blasts

VALENCE (AFP) — At least one person was killed and four injured Saturday when a number of devices exploded in a department store in this southeastern Spanish city, local officials said. Two incendiary devices exploded early in the afternoon in the toilets of the large department store, then another small device exploded in the store's car park, an official said. Slightly later, a fourth device exploded in a cafe on the sixth floor that was full of customers. Two Basque radio stations had contacted police earlier Saturday after receiving anonymous telephone warnings from a caller claiming to represent the Basque separatist organisation ETA.

Tantawi calls for talks on terrorism

CAIRO (AFP) — One of the spiritual leaders of Egypt's Muslims has called for a summit of Islamic scholars and the theologians to discuss terrorism in an article published Saturday in the government daily Al Akhbar. Egypt's mufti, Sheikh Mohammad Sayed Tantawi, said he "openly encourages the holding of this conference to highlight Islam's point of view on terrorist acts." He pointed to the November suicide bombing of Egypt's embassy in Pakistan which killed 17 people, saying its authors had "put themselves outside Islamic Sharia law because Islam forbids all such criminal acts." The Islamabad bombing led to calls for a conference of "ulema" or religious scholars after investigators suspected Egyptian or other militants living in Pakistan of being behind the attack.

Syria-Israel talks resume on Dec. 27

Venue will be near Washington, Christopher announces after Syria, Jordan and Israel trips

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter with agency despatches

ISRAEL AND SYRIA will resume their land-for-peace negotiations near Washington on Dec. 27, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said in a statement released after he met with Mr. Peres.

He said the first round of talks will last three days, recess for a week and then resume the first week in January for another three days. And then, Mr. Christopher said, he would return to the Middle East to discuss the results with Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad.

"Clearly, we are entering a new phase of negotiations," he said. "Conducting the negotiations in a site near Washington will intensify the discussions."

Mr. Christopher offered the full support of the United States to conclude a peace treaty. It would be based on Israeli relinquishing land in

exchange for Syrian diplomatic recognition.

"I am very pleased to announce that negotiations are going to resume to deal with all the issues relevant to Israeli-Syrian peace," Mr. Christopher said in a statement released after he met with Mr. Peres.

Mr. Christopher, who met in Damascus Friday with President Assad before travelling to Israel, said his statement was issued on behalf of U.S. President Bill Clinton, Mr. Assad and Mr. Peres.

"Syria and Israel will have the full support of the United States as we launch this more intensive and concentrated effort to reach a just and comprehensive peace for the region," he said.

This reflects the very clear desire I have heard from both President Assad and Prime Minister Peres to press forward and make progress as rapidly as possible," he said.

Earlier on Saturday, Mr.

Christopher held talks with His Majesty King Hussein at Aqaba.

Mr. Christopher later paid a similar call on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Jericho before returning to Israel.

On Friday, Mr. Christopher reported "substantial progress towards reopening peace talks between Israel and Syria as the two sides swapped proposals for negotiating a land-for-peace deal.

Mr. Peres signalled in Washington this week he would yield all of the land from which Israeli monitors Syrian military moves and keeps a protective eye on northern Israeli towns for the right peace terms.

That would satisfy the demand President Assad has been making.

But Mr. Assad, in a four-hour meeting with Mr. Christopher on Friday, did not immediately agree to reopen talks. Instead, he sent

(Continued on page 7)

Israel army quits Kalkiliya amid Palestinian applause

KALKILIYA (AFP) — Israeli troops withdrew from the West Bank town of Kalkiliya on Saturday ending 28 years of occupation and bringing Palestinian self-rule to the outskirts of Tel Aviv.

Five military jeeps left the Israeli army base at the centre of the town of 40,000 residents, as part of accords extending Palestinian autonomy across the West Bank.

Some 450 Palestinian police arrived from the centre of Tel Aviv, erupted with happiness cheering and enthusiastically honking their car horns.

Police toured the town in their vehicles, followed by women and children applauding and praising Mr. Arafat, while young people danced and sang accompanied by tambourines.

But unlike in some of the other towns no celebratory shots were fired in the air, and no stones were thrown at the departing troops.

"I wish you good luck and I hope you will control the town well," said Israeli general Gaby Ofir, a West Bank military commander, as he left the town.

"Everything has gone very

well," said Palestinian General Musa Jadallah, chief of police in Kalkiliya.

"It's like a Palestinian marriage, the return of the town under the control of the Palestinian National Authority," the general said. "We are advancing towards a peace between two peoples."

"It's incredible, I can't describe what I feel," he said.

Israeli troops are to also withdraw from the West Bank towns of Bethlehem and Ramallah by the end of the year under the accord before Palestinian elections on January 20.

Hazzar, now a policeman, said he spent 21 years in the Israeli prison.

"I did not spend all those years in prison for nothing, but for the future of my country," he said.

Gen. Amin Al Hindi, chief of Palestinian military intelligence, said the official transfer of power ceremony went "very calmly."

"The Israeli troops moved up their withdrawal because they had finished their preparations," he said. "It was not because of security reasons."

PNA-Hamas dialogue in Cairo delayed by 2 days

CAIRO (Agencies) — Talks aimed at finding a compromise to allow the militant Hamas group to take part in the first Palestinian self-rule elections next month were postponed for two days on Saturday, a senior Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official said.

Mohammed Sobieh, the PLO's representative to the Arab League, said the negotiations between delegations from the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority (PNA), due here Saturday, would now be held on Monday.

"For technical reasons, the Hamas delegation, which is currently in Khartoum, should reach Cairo on Sunday night and will start the meeting with the Palestinian (National) Authority on Monday," he said.

Mr. Said said the delegation met Sudan's spiritual leader, Hassan Al Tourabi, on Friday and voiced hope that the negotiations would produce a formula for reconciliation between Hamas and the self-rule authority.

"That will give the Hamas delegation time for more consultations," he added. The delegation was in the Sudanese capital to meet the hardline group's exiled leaders.

The group, which has kil-

led dozens of Israelis in the past two years, has been bitterly opposed to the PLO's accords with Israel that have allowed autonomy in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

It has denied that a split over the group's stance on self-rule has emerged in its ranks in the past few weeks despite contradictory signals from its members inside the territories and abroad.

The 13-strong Hamas delegation, made up of leaders from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and abroad, met Sudan's President Omar Al Bashir on Saturday and briefed him on the talks, the Hamas representative in Khartoum, Munir Said, said.

Mr. Said said the delegation met Sudan's spiritual leader, Hassan Al Tourabi, on Friday and voiced hope that the negotiations would produce a formula for reconciliation between Hamas and the self-rule authority.

Voters from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip will elect an 83-member autonomy council and the president of an executive authority in the first Palestinian elections on Jan. 20.

(Continued on page 7)

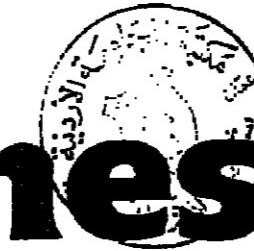
An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جordan. تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة العربية الإلزامية - الراي.

Vatican foreign minister visits Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Vatican Foreign Minister Jean-Louis Tauran arrived Saturday on the highest-level visit by a Holy See official since it established formal ties with Israel nearly two years ago. During his four-day visit, the papal envoy is scheduled to meet Monday with Prime Minister Shimon Peres and President Ezer Weizman, a member of his delegation told AFP. The visit has attracted special attention after Pope John Paul II was quoted as saying Thursday that he recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, Leah Rabin, the widow of the slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, said after an audience with the Pope at the Vatican Thursday that he had told her Jerusalem had "a double role: a capital of Israel and the capital of the three faiths, Judaism, Islam and Christianity." Israeli radio reported that Vatican officials later played down the Pope's remarks, insisting that official Vatican policy does not recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (see page 2). Mr. Tauran will visit Mr. Rabin's tomb in the Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem and meet the mayor of the city, Ehud Olmert.

Jordan Times



King calls on Iraqi dissidents to get together to save their country

Future of Iraq is the sole decision of the people of Iraq

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Saturday called on Iraqi opposition groups to work together to save Iraq from disintegration and end the suffering of the Iraqi people.

King Hussein also said he was open to the idea of a federation between Jordan and Iraq if that would help end the political and economic isolation of Iraq, but stressed that the decision was solely up to the Iraqi people.

The King, addressing a joint press conference at Aqaba with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, also blamed the Iraqi regime for the suffering of the Iraqis and accused Baghdad of denying them their human rights.

Mr. Christopher, who was in Aqaba for three hours on a Mideast shuttle aimed at reactivating Syrian-Israeli peace talks, praised Jordan for the interception of an Iraq-bound consignment of spare parts for missiles in violation of the international sanctions against that country.

The King reiterated that he had "no personal ambitions in Iraq."

Confirming that Jordanian



His Majesty King Hussein and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher address a press conference after a meeting in Aqaba on Saturday (photo by Yousef Allan)

officials had met with Iraqi opposition figures in a bid to reactivate Syrian-Israeli peace talks, praised Jordan for the interception of an Iraq-bound consignment of spare parts for missiles in violation of the international sanctions against that country.

"Much has been said about a federation (between Iraq and Jordan). What we said in meetings with many Iraqis throughout this period was that as far as I'm concerned, a) I have no personal ambitions in Iraq and b) I am

calling upon them to come together to save Iraq from disintegration."

"As regarding a federation, it could be one of the ideas they could discuss but it is up to them, not to me, and when we speak about a federation or confederation... the U.S. is a good example of how people could come together," he added.

However, the objective of getting the Iraqi opposition

(Continued on page 7)

American government partially shut down

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton vowed to stand firm Saturday in a budget showdown that partially closed the federal government, harshly rebuking Republican lawmakers before a meeting with Democratic leaders on January 20.

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"I did not spend all those years in prison for nothing, but for the future of my country," he said.

Gen. Amin Al Hindi, chief of Palestinian military intelligence, said the official transfer of power ceremony went "very calmly."

"The Israeli troops moved up their withdrawal because they had finished their preparations," he said. "It was not because of security reasons."

NATO hits first hurdle in Bosnia mission — weather

leaving today," Captain Michael O'Gallagher said at Aviano. "It would be nice if we left tomorrow but we have no promises."

NATO commander General George Joulwan ordered the operation to roll at 0130 GMT after the U.N. Security Council formally handed the peacekeeping baton in Bosnia to the alliance.

Some 60,000 troops, backed by tanks, artillery and "robust rules of engagement" will crowd into the Balkans to enforce a peace which the

(Continued on page 7)

Unions keep heat on Juppe; return of workers is fitful

PARIS (AFP) — Hundreds of thousands of people staged a new day of protest in virtually every French town on Saturday, keeping up the pressure on Prime Minister Alain Juppe ahead of negotiations next week.

Meanwhile a return to work on the railways and in the Paris mass transit system, which began on Friday, remained fitful, with many services still non-existent.

The protests from two of the three main unions and a teachers' union marched through the capital, while hundreds of thousands rallied in provincial cities.

Police estimated the Paris demonstration at around 40,000, but unions said the figure was more than

(Continued on page 7)

Advertisement

On the occasion of its Thirty Second anniversary, Royal Jordanian Airline, has the pleasure to announce the introduction of a new service to facilitate the check-in process for passengers.

Effective December 15th, 1995 passengers travelling to Amsterdam, New York, Chicago, London and Berlin will have the choice of obtaining their Boarding Pass as well as paying airport departure tax at our sales office located in Housing Bank, Commercial Centre. This service will be extended to other sales offices at a later stage.

ROYAL JORDANIAN

Setting New Standards

Middle East News

JORDAN TIMES, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1995

Ekeus report says Iraq continuing to hide weapons data

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Iraq has recently provided new data about its weapons programmes but is still concealing information and making misleading statements, the United Nations says.

"Likewise, information which should have been volunteered in support of a policy of complete transparency is not provided," according to a report by the Special Commission in charge of scrapping Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction.

The report, submitted to Security Council members late on Friday, mentions the recent seizure by Jordanian authorities of missile components destined for Iraq. It also gives details of a programme for radiological weapons — which scatter radioactive material — intended for use in the Iran-Iraq war but, according to Iraq, eventually shelved.

The U.N. commission said it "welcomes the repeated assurances which it has received from the deputy prime minister, Mr. Tareq Aziz... regarding Iraq's full cooperation."

But "instances continue to be encountered at all levels, where full disclosure is not made and misleading statements are put forward," it said.

"The issue thus remains whether there are two policies which are being pursued, one calling for full cooperation and the other for concealing proscribed activities as long as possible."

If Iraq could speedily resolve these problems, the commission believed it should be possible to clear up outstanding issues in the near future, said the report, which coincides with a visit to New York by Mr. Aziz and follows a recent visit to Baghdad by the commission chairman, Rolf Ekeus.

The U.N. commission must be satisfied that all Baghdad's nuclear, chemical, biological and ballistic missile programmes have been destroyed and will not be revived before the Security Council can consider easing sanctions, including an oil sales ban, imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The report said "the most significant developments" had occurred over the past six months, especially regarding disclosure of Iraq's proscribed programmes and its attitude toward cooperation with the commission.

This was a reference to a

mass of new data handed over after the defection to Jordan in August of Lieutenant-General Hussein Kamel, a son-in-law of President Saddam Hussein and mastermind of Iraqi weapons development. Baghdad said he had withheld the information even from his own authorities.

Referring to reports of continuing clandestine activities, the U.N. commission said it had launched an investigation into a "large shipment of high-grade missile components destined for Iraq" which the Jordanian government recently intercepted. The United Nations wanted to discover the exact nature and source of the items, the procurement network used and the Iraqi end-user.

"Iraq has denied that it sought to purchase these components, although it has recently acknowledged some of them are currently in Iraq," the report said.

"There is evidence that this acquisition is for long-range missiles and thus further indicates continued activities in Iraq in the area of proscribed missiles."

Iraq recently admitted that, after the adoption of a 1991 U.N. resolution calling for its disarming, it had conducted a covert programme to develop and produce a surface-to-surface missile and conducted a number of tests.

"This missile would be capable of prohibited ranges," it said, referring to a U.N.-imposed maximum of about 150 kilometres, though these activities were not disclosed in what Iraq said was its final, and complete missile-related disclosures submitted last month.

In late August, Iraq acknowledged the existence of a programme related to radiological weapons. According to additional information provided this month, orders were given at the end of 1987 to explore their possible use for "area denial" in the final stages of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

Three prototype bombs were detonated at test sites — one as a ground-level static test and two others dropped from an aircraft. The U.N. report did not give the sites' locations.

According to Iraq, the results were disappointing and the project shelved. Baghdad was said to be preparing a detailed account for the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Germany cuts down on aircraft for Iraq watch

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Germany's intention to cut down the number of aircraft loaned to the United Nations in Iraq would seriously curtail arms inspection operations, according to a U.N. report released over the weekend.

Germany for almost four years had been supplying the U.N. Special Commission, in charge of ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, with two Transall transport aircraft and three CH-53 helicopters for low altitude inspections.

In a report to the Security Council, Rolf Ekeus, head of the commission, said Germany in the near future would supply only one transport plane and two instead of three helicopters for the commission's use. He said his

efforts to get replacements have been futile.

Consequently, Mr. Ekeus said his commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is in charge of nuclear weapons material, would have to cut down their work.

"Activities would have to be curtailed to a point where the ability of the commission and the IAEA to carry out their mandate could be called into question," he said.

"This would have serious consequences" for both agencies, he said.

Mr. Ekeus also reported that Iraq had refused to allow into the country a German parliamentary mission responsible for overseeing U.N. arms activities in Iraq.

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church, Tel. 610749; Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 637285.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590; Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757; Terrassante Church Tel. 622366; Church of the Annunciation Tel. 633541.

Anglican Church Tel. 652826; Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775252.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624382.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 645457.

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Osama Al Husaini ... 847399

Dr. Bilal Al Sayyid ... 890280

Dr. Khalil Abu Marjouh ... 779797

Dr. Hisham Kan'an ... 790286

Firas pharmacy ... 661912

Ferdous pharmacy ... 778336

Al Asmaa pharmacy ... 637055

Nairoukh pharmacy ... 623672

Al Salam pharmacy ... 636730

Yacoub pharmacy ... 644945

Salmouni pharmacy ... 637000

Nouroukh pharmacy ... 623672

Najib pharmacy ... 847632

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Relative cold weather conditions will prevail with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds easterly moderate. In Aqaba,



U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher shakes hands with Palestine Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat in Jericho in West Bank on Saturday (AFP photo)

Humanitarian and political actions are inseparable, experts affirm at seminar

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Leading human rights advocates insisted on Saturday that humanitarian action should be coupled with political action and called for the inclusion of human rights principles in school curricula to strengthen and promote humanitarian values and rights.

"Promoting humanitarian values and enhancing the respect for human dignity could be achieved by spreading awareness of the basic principles of human rights and international humanitarian law," said Mohammad Hadid at a seminar entitled "Humanitarian Action and Media" organised by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Jordan in cooperation with the Jordan Press Association (JPA).

Mr. Hadid pointed out that efforts were currently under way to promote humanitarian values and rights in the Kingdom. He said that a committee of representatives of the ICRC, the Jordan Red Crescent and the Ministry of Education were studying the possibility of introducing the concepts and principles

of humanitarian law and human rights in the school curricula.

JPA President and President of the International Organisation of Journalists (IOJ) Suleiman Qudah called on the international community to exert more efforts to help Algerian journalists who have become main targets of extremists in their strife-torn country.

"When talking about the role of the press and humanitarian action we should always keep in mind that the (Algerian) journalists have been subjected to the worst of torture, psychological and physical," said Mr. Qudah.

"I call on your behalf and on the behalf of the IOJ to (to exert efforts) to put an end to and condemn this barbaric action that has taken the life of more than 40 journalists," said Mr. Qudah. "I call on your behalf and on the behalf of the IOJ to (to exert efforts) to put an end to and condemn this barbaric action that has taken the life of more than 40 journalists," said Mr. Qudah.

"One of the distinctive features of our time is that humanitarian action and political action are coming closer" to each other, Mr. Giovannoni said. "Humanitarian action must be carried out in parallel with political and military action and humanitarian action must not and could not be substitute for the other."

He said the need for protection of victims of conflicts were ignored or overshadowed by the media, which presented humanitarian action since the beginning of the nineties in terms of humanitarian assistance, relief convoys, food aid, and medical services.

"What about the suffering of imprisoned soldiers and

people due to the four-year-old international embargo on the country, said that the Arab World was one of the areas worst hit by conflicts.

The head of the ICRC delegation in Jordan, Yves Giovannoni, partly blamed the media for inaccurate coverage of humanitarian work. He stressed the importance of political action being in concert with humanitarian action.

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Lebanon Muslim cleric raps Catholic synod call

BEIRUT (R) — The spiritual leader of Lebanon's Shiite Muslims on Friday criticised an appeal by Lebanese Catholic bishops to Syria to withdraw its troops from its smaller neighbour.

Sheikh Mohammad Mehdi Shamseddine said that the final message issued on Thursday by the Synod of Lebanese Bishops to chart the future of their church, held in the Vatican, contained "some remarks that raise suspicion."

"The presence of Syrian Arab forces and the integration between Lebanon and Syria does not reduce Lebanon's sovereignty or its independence or Lebanon's will at (Arab-Israeli) peace talks," Sheikh Shamseddine said in a statement.

"Lebanon is not suffering from a lack of sovereignty except from Israeli occupation," added Sheikh Shamseddine, the spiritual head of

the largest community in Lebanon.

The bishops said in their final message that their country's internal peace "must be translated by the departure from Lebanon of the Syrian forces and the presence of the Lebanese army to all national territory."

But Sheikh Shamseddine said the presence of the Syrian troops was a necessity for the Lebanese state in its peace march and its attempt to re-establish its authority after the 1975-90 civil war.

Syria has an estimated 35,000 soldiers in Lebanon and is the main power broker in the country's politics. Israel holds an anti-guerrilla border buffer zone in South Lebanon.

The bishops message also said Lebanon's sovereignty should be re-established by liberating it from Israeli occupation.

Vatican says its stand on Jerusalem unchanged

VATICAN CITY (R) — The Vatican, in an oblique reference to comments by the widow of assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, said on Saturday its position on the status of Jerusalem remained unchanged.

Leah Rabin told reporters after a private audience with Pope John Paul on Thursday that the pontiff had told her he acknowledged Jerusalem's "double role" as capital of the Jewish state and capital of the world's three great faiths.

"When it comes to the question of the role of Jerusalem, I heard him say to," she said. "I wasn't there alone. I was with my children. And it was clearly said."

The Vatican, in its daily bulletin, made no reference to Leah Rabin or to the Pope's reported words, but said:

"The Holy See's position has been known for years."

The Vatican wants international guarantees to protect the city of Jerusalem as the patrimony of three major religions, with free access to all believers.

Most countries, including the Vatican, do not formally recognise Israel's 1980

"annexation" of Arab East Jerusalem and its declaration of the city as the "united and eternal" capital of the Jewish state.

Leah Rabin said the Pope made his remarks in a "very informal" 15-minute meeting at the Vatican.

Queen departs on two-day working trip to Brussels

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor left Sunday on a two day working trip to Brussels, where she will be hosted by Their Majesties King Albert, Queen Paola and Queen Fabiola, according to a Royal Court statement.

The Queen will be the guest of honour at the ceremony marking the 20th Anniversary of the King Baudoin Foundation, which was established by the late King to "improve the living conditions of the population" and is chaired by his widow Queen Fabiola, the statement said.

The Foundation's diverse programmes include income-generating projects for the country's unemployed, environmental education and awareness, protection and preservation of Belgium's rich cultural heritage as well as the promotion of the development of rural women in Third World countries, according to the statement.

Queen Noor and Queen Fabiola, who are members of the International Steering Committee on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women (ISC), will discuss the plans for the 1996 ISC meeting that will be organised by the Noor Al Hussein Foundation and held in Amman next May, the statement said.

The meeting, which will focus on food security, micro-credit for rural women and the enhancement of the quality of life of women and their families, will assess the impact of the Beijing Conference on the needs and rights of rural women and formulate a plan of action.



The ISC, which was founded in 1992, is an advocacy group comprising 16 wives of heads of states and governments representing the world's five regions, who promote the implementation of the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women through the mobilisation of political will and public opinion and the formulation and implementation of national policies for rural women around the world.

According to the statement, the King Baudoin Foundation has developed the DIMITRA Rural Women and Development Project comprised of three distinct components: the promotion of a rural women and development guidebook.

The Secretariat focuses on collecting data, fund-raising and compiling a database on rural women throughout the world; while the guidebook identifies NGOs and research institutes to improving the living conditions of women in rural areas of the Third World, according to the statement.

Queen Noor's representative to the ISC, Mrs. Iman Mufi, accompanied the Queen on her visit.

Prince Talal addresses US journalists, scholars

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Prince Talal Bin Mohammad, His Majesty King Hussein's military secretary, addressed on Friday in New York a high level group of U.S. newspaper and magazine editors, scholars and industrialists, according to a statement from the Royal Court.

In his discussion, Prince Talal gave an overview of recent political and economic events in the Middle East, including the impact of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and development on the various tracks of the peace process, the statement said.

He reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to a regional comprehensive peace and its commitment to supporting the Palestinian people in attaining their rights in their homeland, according to the statement.

Prince Talal held up the success of the Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit which was held in Amman between Oct. 27 and 31, 1995, as an example of the potential present in the region that would be fully realised by peace, the statement said.

Among those attending the breakfast meeting were leading editors from the New York Times, The Washington Post, The New Republic, The Wall Street Journal, US News and World Report and Newsweek magazine. HRH Princess Ghida also attended the meeting, the statement said.

HRH Prince Talal Bin Mohammad, His Majesty King Hussein's military secretary, addressed on Friday in New York a high level group of U.S. newspaper and magazine editors, scholars and industrialists, according to a statement from the Royal Court.

Prosecutors present evidence in trial of 'Islamic Revivalists'

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prosecutors in the State Security Court trial of six people known as "Islamic Revivalists" Saturday presented materials as evidence that the accused were plotting to carry out acts of sabotage.

The six defendants, who pleaded not guilty last month, are charged with illegal possession and manufacturing of explosive materials, automatic weapons and guns for illegal use, and belonging to an illegal organisation.

Captain Ahmad Faris Kurdi of the Irbid Police Department told the court Saturday that he searched the home of the fourth defendant, Khalid Mohammad Mustafa Kilani in Hakama town in Irbid, but found no explosives.

Instead, Captain Kurdi said, the defendant himself led him to a cave two metres away from the defendant's home where

the explosive materials were hidden.

"Khalid (the defendant) led us to a cave near his house and helped us dig 50 centimetres underground before we finally found the explosives wrapped in a black plastic bag," Capt. Kurdi said.

He added that the seized explosive materials, according to the police register, included TNT and C4, one hand-grenade, an automatic timer, batteries, electric wires and a red bag.

The explosives, which had been buried in the cave since 1991, according to the charge sheet, were presented before the court, and Capt. Kurdi positively identified the seized material.

Defence attorney Kamal Nasser, however, said that the red bag, listed among the evidence retrieved by the police, was not part of the evidence presented Saturday in court and demanded that bag be made available as part of the evidence.

The defence attorneys are trying to prove that the explosives allegedly found with their clients were made available by a person from a neighbouring country.

According to the defence, their clients gathered the materials to protect themselves during the Gulf War in 1991, "in case war began in Jordan," and that when the war was over, their clients buried the explosives to get rid of them.

Explosive expert First Lieutenant Ali Abdullah Ensour, of the Public Security Department (PSD), told the court that some of the evidence he examined could still be used to fabricate an explosive device if other appropriate materials were available.

The TNT and C4 could be used if an electric source and an ignition were available, and these explosives could cause damage and death," he said adding that no ignitions were found with the seized items.

Mr. Nasser asked the

court to postpone the session to allow time for the defence to present an argument contesting the legality of the way the evidence was examined and handled by the authorities.

Presiding Judge Hafez Amin set Dec. 18 as the new date to continue the trial.

Meanwhile, Muslim militant Abu Rishteh, accused of slander against His Majesty King Hussein, will testify today (Sunday) at the State Security Court, the defendant's attorney Mohammad Salayneh told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Abu Rishteh, spokesman of the illegal Hezb Al Tahrir, last month pleaded innocent to charges of belonging to an illegal organisation and of slandering the King in a newspaper interview in October.

Mr. Salayneh, one of three attorneys defending Mr. Abu Rishteh, added that there will be two additional defence witnesses. He refused to elaborate.

Arab airlines meet to discuss technical challenges

AMMAN (Petra) — Delegates from 11 Arab airlines' technical committees gathered at the Amman Marriott Hotel Saturday to discuss issues connected with modern communications, establishing a database system for Arab airlines, and reducing the cost of communications among these air carriers.

Addressing the opening session of the meeting, organised by the Arab Air Carriers Organisation (AACO) and Royal Jordanian (RJ), RJ President Nader Dahabi, said rapid developments in the world

of technology makes it incumbent upon Arab airlines to step up cooperation to meet competition from other world airline alliances.

Arab airlines need to adopt modern communications and reservation systems following the example of international airlines, Mr. Dahabi said.

Such systems as the Galileo reservation system, for instance, would immensely improve airline efficiency, and equip them with the means to confront mounting challenges in air transport services expected by the end of this century, said Mr. Dahabi.

He said the AACO is bound by duty to help Arab airlines to face challenges in the air industry.

Taking part in the two-day meeting, hosted in Amman for the first time, are delegates from the national air carriers of the Arab region: Middle East Airlines (MEA), Egypt Air, Syrian Airlines, Tunisian Airlines, Air Algeria, Sudan Airways, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Emirates Air, and Yemenia as well as Gulf Air representatives and Royal Jordanian.

Nader Dahabi

Royal Wings soon to start daily flights to Aqaba

AMMAN (J.T.) — The newly created airline company, Royal Wings, owned by Royal Jordanian (RJ), will embark on two daily flights between Amman and Aqaba starting at the beginning of 1996, according to an RJ official Saturday.

Royal Wings will make two flights to and from Aqaba every day, according to Ahd Quntar, RJ's appointed general manager who also noted that the company will commence operations with one 50-seat Canadian-made Bombardier Dash 8-300 aircraft.

Mr. Quntar said the aircraft, which is leased to Royal Wings, is due to arrive in Amman on Dec. 20 while a similar aircraft

will be arriving in April next year.

According to Mr. Quntar, the airplanes, also to be leased to Royal Wings, have undergone feasibility and technical studies by RJ teams and were found to be appropriate for the flight operation.

Royal Wings will be operating on a purely commercial basis, he added.

In January this year a Bombardier aircraft ran two demonstration flights for RJ officials over Amman as part of the Canadian company's bid to market the aircraft in the region.

According to Mr. Quntar, Royal Wings will operate the flights from Queen Alia International Airport to Aqaba in the first three months of 1996, but will later use Marka airport when the latter has been refurbished. Marka airport is undergoing a JD 7 million face lift to enable it to cater to the expected increased flights as a result of the boom in the tourist industry.

Mr. Quntar said the creation of the new airline company came as a result of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty which increased efforts on the part of both countries to promote regional tourism.

Jordan has embarked on an \$85 million airport modernisation plan to cope with a forecast rise in regional tourism, according to the Director General of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Ahmad Jweibet last month.

According to Mr. Jweibet, airline traffic to Jordan rose by 6.5 per cent in the first eight months of 1995, compared to the same period last year.

Mr. Quntar was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying that in its next stage Royal Wings will operate flights to Tel Aviv, Alexandria, Cairo, Aswan, Sharm Al Sheikh, Al Ghardaqah, Damascus and Beirut, once aviation agreements have been signed with the concerned countries.

The CAA is currently studying agreement drafts with these countries, Mr. Quntar said.

RJ to hold 32nd sales and marketing meeting

By Lima Nabil
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The national carrier, Royal Jordanian (RJ), will Sunday hold its 32nd marketing and sales conference with the participation of directors of RJ's regional offices around the world.

Deputy Director General for marketing and sales Majdi Sabri underlined the importance of the meeting, which he said comes at a time when the carrier has in the past few months achieved record numbers in sales and marketing.

The meeting will focus on means to market Amman as a centre of religious tourism and to attract Muslim and Christian pilgrims wishing to visit Jerusalem, Mecca and other religious sites in Jordan, Syria and Iraq.

He said RJ's plans to intensify marketing Jordan's tourist attractions in Europe and to operate unscheduled

flights to support the tourism sector in the Kingdom.

He said the conference will announce the opening of a new route linking Amman and Bombay, thus raising the number of RJ's routes to 47.

The airliner, he said, has announced a comprehensive plan to control expenses and increase productivity.

Deputy Director General for public relations Muneeb Touqan, meanwhile, said convening the meeting comes at a time when the world's airliner faces a serious turning point in planning to receive the 21st century.

Mr. Touqan said he expected the number of passengers to be transported by the carrier in 1996 to reach about 1,400,000, adding that RJ will in 1996 add the new Airbus 310 to its 17-aircraft fleet.

Study projects economic benefits in some areas

AMMAN (Petra) — A Japanese technical team currently conducting a study on the Kingdom's economic situation, Saturday projected that the Middle East peace process will offer Jordan important economic opportunities that will enable it to earn foreign currency and boost the tourist and export industries.

He also pointed out development programmes which would require cooperation with neighbouring countries and donor nations.

Mr. Yanitama said Japan appreciates the economic reform programme undertaken by the Jordanian government since 1989.

According to the Ministry of Planning, the team is expected to stay in Jordan until Dec. 18 to hold further meetings with officials at the ministries of industry and trade, water and irrigation, municipal and rural affairs, finance, education, labour, tourism and antiquities as well as with the Central Bank of Jordan and other banking officials.

Speaking at a meeting with Acting Ministry of Planning Secretary General Salem Ghawi, team leader Roji Yanitama said peace was bound to open vast avenues for Jordan to reconstruct its trade and conduct regional cooperation in such areas as water, development of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

Mr. Yanitama, who has been entrusted with the mission by the Japanese foreign ministry presented

details of future development plans in the region but pointed out areas in which Jordan would face difficulties in executing economic schemes.

He also pointed out development programmes which would require cooperation with neighbouring countries and donor nations.

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Study aims to raise level of Dead Sea waters

Plans for Jordan Valley envision hotels, fisheries and free zone

By Ghaliya Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The ambitious master plan for the development of the Jordan Rift Valley (JRV) is expected to be finalised in February 1997 when plans for the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal (RSDSC) project are completed, according to Zafer Alem, Assistant Secretary General at the Jordan Valley Authority and the Jordan Rift Valley Coordinator.

"The JRV development master plan project will depend on the technical economic feasibility study of the RSDSC project," he said.

Mr. Alem told the Jordan Times in an interview that phase one of the RSDSC study, which was initiated in October 1995, is being prepared by a consortium of four companies from Jordan, Israel, the U.S. and Britain as well as the World Bank, the facilitator which signed the contract with the

consortium on behalf of the Jordanian and Israeli governments.

The main objective of the RSDSC project, which Mr. Alem described as the "backbone of the JRV project," is based on a restoration plan which aims at raising the water level of the Dead Sea in 25 years.

The water level has declined by 14 metres during the past 40 years.

He said the total amount of water which will be diverted from the Red Sea will reach 2 billion cubic meters (bcm) per year. About 700 million cubic meters (mcm) per year will be desalinated and 1.3 bcm per year will be restored to stabilise the Dead Sea water level with a generation of 350-500 gigawatts per hour (gwh) per year of net on-peak hydroelectric energy.

After this process is completed in 25 years, the Dead Sea level is restored to its natural level, the quantity of water which will be diverted from the Red Sea will be limited to the evaporation losses from the Dead Sea.

Therefore, the fresh water production will decrease to about 500 mcm per year with a corresponding reduction of Red Sea water intake, which will result in a stable Dead Sea surface.

Accordingly, only 1.3 bcm per year will be diverted to the Dead Sea.

Mr. Alem said the RSDSC study, which is being conducted in two phases includes technical, economic and social feasibility studies of the project, assessments of its environmental impacts and implications as well as determining the technical feasibility of constructing canal and conduit sections, pumping stations, power plants, sea water desalination facilities using reverse osmosis technology, and oil shale restoration plants, all based on diversion of Red Sea

water to the Dead Sea.

Phase one of the \$3 million study which is being financed by the Italian government, is being conducted using compiled, reviewed and available information and reports prepared in Jordan and Israel on this project and other schemes.

The study, which is

expected to be finalised in 12 months, will also identify alternative alignments for the Red Sea to Dead Sea diversion and assess potential impacts the diversion of water from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea will have on the local environment.

Such environmental impact assessments will look at, for example, physical and economic effects on existing and potential Dead Sea mineral projects and other tourist industries as well as the environmental impact associated with raising the level of the Dead Sea and impacts of any canal or pipeline breach which

could lead to contamination of groundwater sources.

Potential benefits will also be considered under phase one of the study.

The project will make use of desalinated water for municipal, commercial and industrial uses. It will also encourage population settlement in agricultural areas along the canal as well as create an international region of trade and industry.

According to a brief

description of the proposed canal project, constructing canal and conduit sections will convey water from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea and pumping stations to be located relatively closer to the Red Sea.

EU sets out political agenda, prepares to grow eastwards

MADRID (R) — European Union (EU) leaders met for the second day of their summit Saturday, pledging to prepare for the 21st century with a single currency and new members.

Leaders of the 11 countries from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean who hope to join the bloc were due at the summit later in the day to be briefed on the EU's plans.

Draft conclusions from the summit set out what the leaders called a political agenda to prepare for the new century, including enlargement, creating a single currency by Jan. 1, 1999 and reviewing EU treaties to make it all work.

The leaders met some of their goals Friday, agreeing on the timetable for the new single currency and naming it the Euro. They also agreed to launch their inter-governmental treaty review in Turin, Italy, on March 29

next year.

"Success in all these tasks will mean that a large community enjoying the benefits of freedom, prosperity and stability can be set up Europe-wide," the draft said.

"Enlargement is both a political necessity and a historic opportunity for Europe," the draft concluded.

But the leaders, aware of the difficulties of bringing in the backward economies of the East, stopped short of setting a date for negotiations to begin with the old Communist Bloc.

The draft calls instead for the European Commission to prepare a series of reports on the candidate countries and the impact of enlargement by the end of the treaty review, so that governments can decide "at the earliest opportunity" after that when to open formal negotiations and with which applicants.

Cyprus and Malta have already been told they can open negotiations six months after the review, likely to last until mid-1997.

Diplomats said some delegations, particularly the Scandinavian countries, were still arguing for clearer language in the summit statement to ensure there would be no discrimination against countries such as the Baltic states.

Economically and politically weaker East European countries fear that the EU's monetary project would be delayed, although some of the main issues, notably the relations between countries in the single currency and those outside were not decided.

Giving the currency a name in the meantime — the Euro — will allow the Union to launch a publicity campaign to prepare a sceptical public for the new money.

formal application for membership.

In other matters, the summit, while welcoming the upcoming elections in Russia, said the leaders hoped it "will strengthen respect for human rights and the consolidation of peace, stability and security in Europe."

Friday's move on the single currency was designed to quieten fears that the EU's monetary project would be delayed, although some of the main issues, notably the relations between countries in the single currency and those outside were not decided.

Giving the currency a name in the meantime — the Euro — will allow the Union to launch a publicity campaign to prepare a sceptical public for the new money.

Bangladesh's Victory Day celebrations subdued by political stalemate

DHAKA (AFP) — Thousands of Bangladeshis poured onto the streets of Dhaka and other cities Saturday to mark this strife-torn country's 25th Victory Day, in independence celebrations overshadowed by chronic political stalemate.

Marking Bangladesh's victory over Pakistan in its bloody 1971 independence war, colourfully dressed men, women and children carrying flowers paid their respects those who died during the conflict.

The sound of fire-crackers echoed around the capital soon after midnight, as crowds began marching through the streets beating drums, singing and waving banners and posters.

There were no reports of violence, although security was stepped up to prevent potential clashes between the slogan-chanting gangs of rival political supporters which roamed the city.

At dawn, President Abdur Rahim Biswas oversaw the first ceremony of the day, laying a wreath at the Martyr's Memorial in nearby Savar district, as a 31-gun artillery salute heralded in the day.

But celebrations were subdued by the ongoing political deadlock, the day after national election were rescheduled for Feb. 7 instead of Jan. 18.

The country's opposition, which is to boycott the Victory Day reception host-

ed by Mr. Biswas later Saturday, has said it will not participate in any polls until Prime Minister Khaleda Zia resigns.

Led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed's Awami League, the opposition has said that free elections are impossible under Mrs. Khaleda and has demanded she hand the country over to a neutral caretaker administration.

Mrs. Khaleda is continuing as interim prime minister after the parliament was dissolved last month and slammed opposition demands as unconstitutional.

In December last year, all 147 opposition MPs walked out of parliament and have been boycotting the house ever since.

There has been no indication when and if the two feuding sides will reach a settlement to end the crisis, but talks are under way to find a solution.

In a statement marking Victory Day, Mr. Biswas said: "However difficult the problem, inshallah (God willing) we will be able to resolve them."

Calling for further consolidation of the democratic system, he said that a "dynamic" democratic process is the key to national progress and prosperity."

His comments came as political commentators appealed for his intervention to break the stalemate.

"There is a sense of pride

today, but it is subdued by the realisation that the political crisis is threatening the democratic institutions," said Mahfuz Anam, editor of the Daily Star.

The political crisis is also a realisation that the leadership has failed to understand that development challenges are massive and Herculean, and cannot be achieved without stability," he added.

Mrs. Khaleda and Mrs. Hasina issued separate statements calling for a strengthening of the democratic process and a continued commitment to the spirit of the independence war.

Some three million people died in the former east Pakistan's fight for independence, a movement which began in 1952 over demands for equal status for the Bengali language along with Urdu, Pakistan's national language.

"At a time when we are supposed to join hands and celebrate the silver jubilee of our victory against the Pakistanis we are locked in a power battle ourselves," said Dhaka housewife Sheuli Rana Majumder.

"It's a shame, because Pakistanis must be enjoying our political scene," she added.

Dhaka and Islamabad have since mended fences, but the war is still fresh in the minds of many Bangladeshis.

Japan main opposition enters leadership battle

TOKYO (R) — Japan's main opposition Shinshinto (New Frontier Party) faces the danger of splitting after two powerful members announced rival leadership campaigns Saturday.

The Dec. 27 contest will pit former Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata against backroom powerbroker Ichiro Ozawa.

At a joint news conference held shortly after the deadline for nominations, the two candidates clashed head-on for the first time in public over policy on the economy, welfare and military.

While stressing the need for "drastic" economic, political and administrative reforms, the 53-year-old Ozawa said Japan should raise the unpopular three-per cent sales tax to 10 per cent within 11 years to fund government investments, tax cuts and welfare costs for the aged.

Mr. Hata, 60, who headed a fragile minority government for two months in 1994, immediately attacked Mr. Ozawa over his proposal on the sales tax.

"You must not carelessly make any pledge ... Individual tax rates must be decided in light of overall economic conditions while defusing the mistrust and anxiety of taxpayers," Mr. Hata, sitting next to Mr. Ozawa, told the news conference.

Mr. Hata also criticised Mr. Ozawa for proposing Japan set up a police contingent, separate from the nation's self-defence forces (military), to take part in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Instead of creating such a special force, Japan should continue to send its military personnel overseas to take part in U.N. Missions, he said.

Some analysts and politicians say the Hata-Ozawa leadership battle could fatally split the one-year-old party, plunging Japanese politics into fresh political chaos.

"The party could risk the danger of a breakup if the intra-party feud was to escalate further," political commentator Kenzo Uchida said.

At Saturday's news conference, however, Mr. Hata and Mr. Ozawa dismissed such speculation.

"There is no worry ... The basis of democracy is elections," Mr. Ozawa said.

Mr. Ozawa played a key role in melding nine opposition parties to form Shinshinto. Its main goal was to challenge Japanese politics dominated for decades by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).



A U.S.-led consortium and North Korea sign an accord for the supply of two light-water nuclear reactors to Pyongyang in a deal involving a halt to North Korea's existing nuclear programme (AFP photo)

N. Korea, consortium sign nuclear deal

NEW YORK (R) — North Korea and a consortium of South Korea, the United States and Japan signed an agreement in New York Friday covering the supply of nuclear supplies and technology to the Communist state.

The agreement calls for the consortium to provide two 1,000-megawatt light-water nuclear reactors to North Korea to be completed by 2003.

In return Pyongyang will phase out older, graphite-based nuclear reactors capable of producing large amounts of plutonium for nuclear weapons.

The supply agreement is a step toward implementing an accord between Washington and Pyongyang reached in Geneva in October 1994 on a \$4.5 billion deal to freeze nuclear development in North Korea in exchange for the reactors.

Ambassador-at-Large Ho Jong, who led the North Korean delegation, signed the agreement in New York with Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, leader of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) delegation, which groups South Korea, Japan and the United States.

Talks on the agreement began in September in Kuala Lumpur and resumed a month later in New York.

The accord had called for an agreement within six months, but "unfortunately we couldn't make it in six months time," Mr. Ho said.

"We had to go through some turns and twists, some ups and downs..."

"For KEDO ... this is only the beginning," Mr. Bosworth said. He said the agreement covers the project's content, how it will be paid for and the terms and conditions for how work will proceed. Without being specific, he said the most difficult moments came at the end of negotiations, when the "key, most important issues" still needed to be resolved.

Many technical details remain, including selection of a prime contractor and a programme coordinator, which will be a U.S. engineering firm. The firm will serve as the technical arm of KEDO in overseeing construction, Mr. Bosworth said.

KEDO will also work out the details of financing from the U.S., South Korea and Japanese governments to reimburse contractors and subcontractors, he said.

South Korea will play a "central role" and Japan a "significant role" in the financing, he added.

In Washington, Dan Poneman of the National Security Council said South Korea would take the central role in financing the project.

He also said that earlier this year, North Korea agreed to KEDO's right to select both reactor model and the prime contractor and, at that time, KEDO decided South Korea would provide the model and pro-

vide the prime contractor.

Asked whether North Korea already had built weapons with its nuclear fuel, Mr. Poneman said North Korea may have separated enough plutonium before the agreed framework was in place for one or two nuclear weapons.

KEDO, set up earlier this year, will first complete its survey of a tentative site for the reactors, Mr. Bosworth said. That will take several months, he said.

Negotiators had wrangled over who would build the infrastructure needed for the reactors. Ho said KEDO will undertake the site preparation and infrastructure improvement.

He added that the agreement could pave the way to improved relations between North and South Korea, still technically at war following the 1950-53 Korean conflict.

As the agreement is implemented, "the North-South dialogue could resume if such an environment and atmosphere prevails that would facilitate such a dialogue," Mr. Ho said.

Mr. Bosworth added that the agreement would be kept regardless of changes in government. In Seoul, President Kim Young-Sam Friday appointed Lee Soo-Sung, the nation's top legal scholar, as his new prime minister as part of a sweeping cabinet reshuffle expected in the next few days.

Doctor: Jackson was 15 minutes from death

NEW YORK (R) — Pop star Michael Jackson was just 15 minutes from death when he collapsed earlier this month, his personal doctor was quoted as saying Friday. Jackson collapsed during a rehearsal and was rushed to a New York hospital on Dec. 6, suffering from a viral infection. He was discharged six days later. Separate statements by the hospital and Jackson's agent Friday said Jackson was recovering well and he would be travelling to Paris and Euro Disney at the weekend. When paramedics reached the entertainer on stage at New York's Beacon Theatre, his pulse was weak and his blood pressure "very, very low," Dr. Allan Metzger told New York Post columnist Cindy Adams. "Michael was acutely and dangerously ill for hours," Ms. Adams quoted the doctor as saying. "The hospital and the insurance-company doctors looked at his records and agreed he could have died in 15 minutes. He had a non-feigned, non-psychiatric illness. An acute, severe and very real illness," Jackson, 37, had been rehearsing for a Home Box Office (HBO) special, "Michael Jackson: One Night Only," that has been postponed indefinitely. It was estimated the show, which was to have been broadcast on Dec. 10, would have drawn a worldwide audience of 250 million viewers.

Playboy goes on sale in Ireland

DUBLIN (AFP) — Playboy magazine went on the sale for the first time in the Irish Republic Friday following the lifting of a ban earlier this year by the censorship of publications board. The January edition, with U.S. actress Pamela Anderson on the cover and an 11-page spread of the Baywatch star posing nude inside, was selling very well and "creating lots of interest," according to Eason's newspaper and book store in downtown Dublin. The magazine was outlawed in 1959 as an obscene publication by the Censorship Board, but a year-long campaign by Playboy's publisher led to the lifting of the ban in September. The magazine's owners pointed out that Playboy is available throughout Europe, including the Vatican, and that while it was bought for pictorial content, its articles had "breadth, stature and international appeal."

Mussolini's limousine sold at London auction

LONDON (R) — A sleek black limousine in which Italian dictator Benito Mussolini took Adolf Hitler touring in Italy before World War II was sold at a London auction for £241,500 (\$370,800). The Lancia Astura Lungo, still decorated with Nazi and Italian fascist symbols, was built for Hitler's visit in May, 1938, to cement the "pact of steel" between the two nations. The limousine had been stored in a barn in Italy until 1980 when restoration began.

Christmas icon fetches record price

LONDON (R) — A Byzantine icon depicting the Christmas story fetched a record £265,500. Christie's auction house said. The Nativity Of Christ depicts Jesus in his crib, surrounded by animals, the Virgin Mary and a host of angels. Sold as part of a collection of Byzantine and post-Byzantine panels and Russian icons, the piece fetched a world record for any icon sold at auction, the British auction house said.

S. Korean ex-President Choi refuses to cooperate

SEOUL (R) — Former South Korean President Choi Kyu-Hah refused to tell prosecutors Saturday his version of events leading up to a 1979 coup and a later massacre — both of which are blamed on his successor Chun Doo Hwan.

"To be probed means setting a precedent, and that kind of precedent in the future could be used politically and would be a burden for many future presidents," Mr. Choi said in a statement read by his lawyer to reporters.

"As a former president, it is not right to set a bad precedent for future presidents and leave them the burden," said the statement read outside Mr. Choi's house.

"Although I may be criticised and have the arrow pointed at me, it is right that I, as a former president, maintain the administration's legitimacy and take this morally right choice."

Prosecutors left Mr. Choi's house earlier after a second failed attempt to get him to

explain the events surrounding Mr. Chun's December 1979 grab for power.

The coup led to an army massacre of civilian protesters in Kwangju in May 1980. Nearly 200 people were killed, by the official count.

Mr. Choi was caretaker head of state at the time of the coup, following the assassination of Park Chung-Hee in October 1979.

Mr. Chun, who is in detention on charges of military rebellion stemming from the coup, has refused to eat since his arrest on Dec. 3 and drinks only barley tea. The ex-general faces indictment on Dec. 22.

Since Mr. Chun's arrest, prosecutors have questioned dozens of people over the coup and the massacre, including his supporters and opponents at the time.

Prosecutors grilled former Prime Minister Shin Hyon-Hwak Saturday over the events which led to Mr. Chun and other leaders of the 1979 coup extending martial

law beyond Seoul.

The imposition of martial law countrywide led to the civilian revolt in Kwangju.

Mr. Chun's military classmate, Roh Tae-Woo, has also been questioned over the two events. Mr. Roh is now in detention awaiting trial Monday on unrelated bribery charges.

He will go on trial Monday together with eight tycoons and six others at the Seoul District Criminal Court on corruption charges.

Mr. Roh is accused of accepting bribes worth \$369 million while in office from 1988-93. He will be the first South Korean head of state to be put on trial.

The ex-president has confessed to amassing a \$654 million political slush fund during his tenure.

"There is no worry ... The basis of democracy is elections," Mr. Ozawa said.

Mr. Ozawa played a key role in melding nine opposition parties to form Shinshinto. Its main goal was to challenge Japanese politics dominated for decades by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Fatima, one of the Catholic Church's most venerated places, was recently portrayed on Iranian TV as being named after the daughter of the Prophet Mohammad.

According to Foreign Ministry officials in Lisbon, Iranians have been applying for visas to Portugal, citing plans for a pilgrimage to Fatima where Catholics believe the Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children in 1917.

The shrine is also well-known as the site where Pope John Paul II survived a stabbing attempt by a Spanish-born former



Russian soldiers stand near the Presidential Palace ruins in the centre of Grozny during the second day of the elections for local authorities and Russian State Duma representatives (AFP photo)

Russians weigh up Yeltsin's warnings on eve of election

MOSCOW (R) — Reform-weary Russians spent the eve of Sunday's parliamentary poll weighing up a warning by President Boris Yeltsin not to return to the past against the Communists' insistence they had modernised themselves.

"Besieged" said a front-page cartoon in Sovetskaya Rossiya of a voter surrounded by a forest of placards representing each of the 43 parties competing for places in the State Duma lower house of parliament.

Saturday was supposed to give the Russian Federation's 104 million voters a break from the constant bickering by candidates who have virtually all promised what people long for most — stability, order and an end to economic crisis.

But the daily most closely linked to the Communist Party could not resist having the last word after the bantering President Boris Yeltsin gave it in a nationwide television address Friday.

Responding to opinion pollsters' predictions of a big showing for the Communists, Mr. Yeltsin appealed to voters spread east to west across 11 time zones and from the Arctic Circle to the southern steppes, not to vote for the "forces of the past".

Without mentioning the Communist Party by name, he reminded voters of the repression and shortages of the old regime and issued a

dark warning of the risk of civil war posed by those who wanted to restore the Soviet Union.

By the same token an open letter from the Communist Party on the front page of Sovetskaya Rossiya did not directly refer to Mr. Yeltsin's speech but highlighted the following in bold type:

"Our party has undergone a hard analysis of the mistakes of the past. Its ranks have been cleansed by life's tests. A modern view on how to revive the economy, destroy crime, regenerate the state, improve our life has been worked out."

In a separate commentary the paper took a swipe at Mr. Yeltsin.

"There's no doubt that the first half-year of the work of the Duma will be given over to preparations for those elections, which are most important for Russia."

Russia's constitution, passed following Mr. Yeltsin's violent clash with hardliners in parliament in 1993, gives the president sufficient powers to overrule the legislature.

While he is expected to sacrifice some ministers like softly spoken Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, analysts do not predict major policy changes before the June election.

But a strong Communist showing in Sunday's poll would be bound to influence the presidential vote and the way Mr. Yeltsin handles the Duma.

Clinton has no serious challenge in New Hampshire primary

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton, at a two-year high in opinion polls, Friday became the first Democratic president in three decades to avoid a serious challenge in the New Hampshire primary.

As filing closed for the primary, which traditionally kicks off the presidential election season, Mr. Clinton was left with a clear field in the Democratic race.

New Hampshire will hold its primary for the 1996 election on Feb. 20, when Democrats and Republicans in the state each vote for their presidential nominee. Clinton campaign aides hailed the passing of the deadline as a milestone in the president's re-election bid.

This is highly significant. It shows support for this president is both wide and deep. In strategic terms, we can already start preparing for the general election against our Republican opponent," said Deputy Campaign Manager Ann Lewis.

On the Republican side, nine major candidates registered for New Hampshire. The frontrunner by a wide margin is Senate majority leader Bob Dole.

The last Democratic president to be spared a challenge in New Hampshire was Lyndon Johnson in 1964. Having to fight off a

new election, ITAR-TASS news agency said.

The main voting starts in the far east at 1900 GMT Saturday and ends in Kaliningrad on the Baltic at 2000 GMT Sunday.

TASS was one of several commentators to say that whatever the result, the election would not have much immediate effect on policy because of a presidential poll due in June.

"Whatever the make-up of the next Duma, there will scarcely be any fundamental changes in Russia's domestic political life...The parliamentary election will basically become a kind of first round of the presidential poll," said TASS.

"There's no doubt that the first half-year of the work of the Duma will be given over to preparations for those elections, which are most important for Russia."

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U.S. House approves defence bill

WASHINGTON (R) — The House of Representatives approved a \$275 billion defence bill Friday that the White House said President Bill Clinton would veto primarily because it would require a costly U.S. anti-missile defence.

The House approved the bill 267-149 and sent it to the Senate for final approval, possibly Tuesday. It approved the bill without change despite a White House paper warning that "in its current form the president would veto it."

The bill is \$7 billion more than Mr. Clinton asked and authorises ships, warplanes and other weapons he did not request. It also repeals Congress's 1993 mandate that only 20 B-2 STEALTH bombers could ever be built for a maximum total of \$44 billion, although it does not immediately authorise more.

The bill also authorises a third cold-war-era Seawolf submarine that Mr. Clinton did not request.

But the White House objected primarily to a provision carrying out the House Republicans' "Contract With America" campaign pledge to speed up development of a system to defend the United States against limited missile attacks by small hostile countries.

The bill would establish a U.S. policy to construct the defence and require that it be developed for construction starting in 2003.

The bill would require deployment by 2003 of a costly defence system to defend the United States from a long-range missile threat which the intelligence community does not believe will ever materialise in the coming decade," the White House paper said.

It said that would needlessly cost tens of billions of dollars and set "U.S. policy on a collision course" with the 1972 U.S.-Soviet anti-ballistic missile treaty because it would likely require more than the one U.S. anti-missile missile site permitted by that treaty.

The White House said Russia might retaliate by stopping implementation of the strategic arms reduction treaty (START-1) reducing U.S.-Russian nuclear weapons and refusing to ratify START-2, which would reduce them further.

The bill would restrict Clinton's authority to commit U.S. troops to U.N. peacekeeping operations and cut his \$371 million request to \$300 million for aid for former Soviet republics.

Russians forces face fierce resistance to Chechen poll

GROZNY, Russia (R) — Clash between Russian forces and Chechen rebels rumbled on in the breakaway region's second city Saturday, Russian military officials said.

The reports from local and Moscow-based officials contradicted a statement Friday by Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov, who said Moscow forces had regained control of Gudermes, some 30 kilometres east of the Chechen capital.

Another group of rebels resisting Moscow's attempts to stage national and local elections in the separatist region held parts of a big village, Ursus-Martan, but there was no violence there.

A Moscow-based Defence Ministry spokesman confirmed by telephone a report from Interfax News Agency that quoted the local military command as saying clashes continued in Gudermes.

Interfax said three Russian servicemen had been killed in the last 24 hours and another 13 wounded, a much lower figure than Thursday, when a group of rebels infiltrated Gudermes.

Mr. Kulikov, quoted by ORT public television, said

Friday 32 Russian soldiers were killed and 41 wounded in the fighting in Gudermes. The defence spokesman said his ministry estimated rebel losses at around 100. There was no independent confirmation of this or the latest news from the region.

Gudermes, a major railway link between Russia proper and the trans-Caucasus, was completely sealed off by Russian troops and reporters were barred from approaching it.

In Grozny, small arms and automatic rifle fire sounded all through the night more intensive than an average level of shooting, and flares often illuminated the devastated city.

But in the morning, the city turned quiet in sunny and cold weather and there few people in the streets.

In Ursus-Martan, 20 kilometres to the southwest of Grozny, about 100 rebel fighters still held several buildings, including a communication centre, a Reuters cameraman said.

The village remained mostly neutral in one year of fighting between Chechen separatists, led by Dzhokhar Dudayev, and Russian troops sent to the region last December to try to halt the rebels' attempt to

break away from Russia. Thousands of civilians, rebel fighters and Russian servicemen have been killed in the conflict. Most of Grozny is still in ruins.

One of the fighters told Reuters his unit came to Ursus-Martan to stop a Moscow-imposed election. "These elections are illegitimate...This is just a show. They have them just to give an appearance that the polls took place," said rebel Commander Isa Khadzhiev.

After two days of voting for deputies to the Russian parliament and for a new regional leader, the Electoral Commission put turnout in Grozny at nearly 50 per cent, ITAR-TASS news agency said Friday night.

The elections in Chechenya are on the whole progressing successfully," President Boris Yeltsin's envoy to the region, Oleg Lobov, told TASS.

Yet journalists in Grozny saw only limited voting activity and any voting was unlikely to be staged at all in the southern mountains, held by Dudayev forces.

Voting began Thursday and will continue until Sunday in the mostly Muslim region of one mil-

lion people. The rest of Russia votes Sunday.

Ruslan Khasbulatov, a former Russian parliamentary speaker and the only serious challenger to the Moscow-appointed Chechen leader, Doku Zavgayev, pulled out of the local election, calling the vote a fraud and Mr. Zavgayev a puppet.

In Moscow, a polling station opened Saturday for Chechens living there and most of those who trickled in said they backed Mr. Zavgayev.

Interfax News Agency, quoting refugees from the second city in rebel Chechenya, said Saturday the bodies of those killed were lying in the streets.

It said wounded Russian soldiers evacuated from Gudermes reported that 40 per cent of it had been destroyed.

One of the soldiers said the fighting between Moscow's forces and the Chechen rebels resembled the battle for the capital Grozny in January. Thousands of people were killed in Grozny and the city was virtually destroyed.

"It is another January," the soldier told Interfax.

Mandela: S. African transition remarkable

JOHANNESBURG (R) — President Nelson Mandela said Saturday that South Africans had made an irreversible break with the past and had undergone a remarkable transition to reclaim their humanity.

"There are few countries which dedicate a national public holiday to reconciliation. But there are few nations with our history of enforced division, oppression and sustained conflict," Mr. Mandela said in a message marking National Reconciliation Day.

But he said there were even fewer countries which had undergone such a remarkable transition to reclaim their humanity.

"We have, in real life, declared our shared allegiance to justice, non-racism and democracy our yearning for peaceful and harmonious nation of equals," Mr. Mandela said.

Mr. Mandela, who came to power in May 1994, said South Africans realised that healing the wounds of the past and freeing themselves from its burden would be a long and demanding task.

He said his unity government had chosen Dec. 16 as Reconciliation Day because the past had made it a living symbol of bitter division.

"We must scorch that rumour or suspicion from the outset. We are meant to be a part of the process of the healing of our nation, of our people, all of us, since every South African has to some extent or other been traumatised," he told the meeting, called to discuss procedural issues.

Meanwhile gunmen killed at least 10 people, including a six-month-old child strapped to its mother's back, in South Africa's

volatile Zulu heartland Friday night, police said Saturday.

The attacks on Inkatha-supporting families took place a few hours after President Mandela said he and his Zulu rival, Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, would launch a new initiative to end political violence in KwaZulu-Natal.

"Violence in this province is of such a magnitude that it is a matter of concern to (Buthelezi) and myself," Mr. Mandela told reporters after meeting the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader and about 30 other Zulu tribal chiefs in Durban.

Commenting on the role of a truth commission set up to probe crimes under apartheid, Mr. Mandela said it was created to help South Africans manage the more difficult aspects of healing the nation's wounds.

"Reconciliation means working together to correct the legacy of past injustice," Mr. Mandela said.

In Cape Town, Truth Commission head Archbishop Desmond Tutu told the first meeting of the body that its role was not that of an inquisition.

"We must scorch that rumour or suspicion from the outset. We are meant to be a part of the process of the healing of our nation, of our people, all of us, since every South African has to some extent or other been traumatised," he told the meeting, called to discuss procedural issues.

The same thing happened. They burst into the house and opened fire, killing two men, two women and a six-month old child.

"Both families were Inkatha supporters. We believe the attacks were politically linked but we're still checking this," Capt. Thomas said.

He said the attacks occurred in the rural Nsimbini area, about 130 kilometres south of Durban.

David Memela, a field-worker with Practical Ministries, a church-based

agency which helps victims of violence, told Reuters the Nsimbini area had a history of political violence.

"There has been a lot of political tension and violence there. But there has also been criminal killings. We're not sure about the latest killings," he said.

Mr. Mandela said Friday that he and Mr. Buthelezi, home affairs minister in South Africa's unity government, had to come up with a plan to move the peace process forward.

"Whoever is responsible for it...we are all now involved in the violence and future historians will say this violence, this slaughtering of innocent people, occurred when (Buthelezi) was the leader of the IFP, and I the leader of the African National Congress, and that it is our duty to ensure we work together to put an end to violence," Mr. Mandela said.

At least 13,000 people were killed in political violence between supporters of Mr. Mandela's African National Congress and those of Inkatha in the volatile province during the decade leading up to the April 1994 democracy elections, but since then political unrest has largely slumped.

The ANC won the national elections and control of seven out of nine provinces. Inkatha, which won power in KwaZulu-Natal is demanding virtual autonomy in the province. The former ruling National Party holds power in the other non-ANC controlled province, the Western Cape.

Italian government faces third test next week

ROME (R) — Italian Prime Minister Lamberto Dini's survival in two confidence votes showed opposition leader Silvio Berlusconi's bark was worse than his bite, commentators said Saturday.

It said that would needlessly cost tens of billions of dollars and set "U.S. policy on a collision course" with the 1972 U.S.-Soviet anti-ballistic missile treaty because it would likely require more than the one U.S. anti-missile missile site permitted by that treaty.

The bill would require deployment by 2003 of a costly defence system to defend the United States from a long-range missile threat which the intelligence community does not believe will ever materialise in the coming decade," the White House paper said.

It said that would needlessly cost tens of billions of dollars and set "U.S. policy on a collision course" with the 1972 U.S.-Soviet anti-ballistic missile treaty because it would likely require more than the one U.S. anti-missile missile site permitted by that treaty.

The bill would restrict Clinton's authority to commit U.S. troops to U.N. peacekeeping operations and cut his \$371 million request to \$300 million for aid for former Soviet republics.

But walk-outs to avoid taking part by deputies — chiefly those on the right — in defiance of party whips saved Mr. Dini's skin. He won the first motion by 14 votes and the second by 13.

For the second time in as many months, Mr. Dini also needed support from Communist deputies to swing the confidence vote.

On the last occasion, in October, he won supporters by promising to offer to hand in his resignation by the end of the year once the budget was approved by both houses of parliament.

The left-leaning Corriere Della Sera said whatever happened in the third vote next week, Mr. Berlusconi would not succeed.

"If the government wins the (house's) confidence, all very well," it said. "The centre-right bloc will have once again demonstrated that its bark is worse than its bite."

"If it does not win, even better, because the centre-right will have to present itself to the electorate as a coalition of irresponsible people," it said.

Mr. Berlusconi has been pressuring for a swift dissolution of parliament and elections in February. Mr. Dini himself has made it clear he would prefer to stay on to guide Italy through the European term and the launch of an important EU review in March.

The centre-left bloc, which supports Mr. Dini, has suggested waiting at least until then, or holding elections in May.

But Mr. Berlusconi's allies were still talking tough.

The leader of one of the small centrist parties, which voted against the government after much soul-searching, said Mr. Dini "had now reached the end of the road".

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Posture vs posturing

THE IRAQI regime has been repeatedly held responsible for the suffering of its people by denying them basic foods and medicines that could have been financed from the sale of limited amounts of oil under U.N. Security Council Resolution 986. Many quarters have expressed outrage at this Iraqi posture every time the Iraqi regime turned down yet another opportunity to sell some of its oil under Resolution 986 as indeed happened a few days ago. Critics from the four corners of the world have blamed Iraq for seemingly putting a higher premium on its pride and sovereignty rights than on the basic needs of its poverty and sickness stricken people.

What has been left largely unsaid is why Iraq might be against accepting Resolution 986.

On taking a closer look at that resolution it would be easily discerned that the real problem lies elsewhere and not in Baghdad's insistence on absolute sovereignty rights over the regime under which its oil would be sold and marketed. For starters, Iraq is asked under the terms of the resolution to transport its oil through the Turkish pipeline at the exclusion of every other outlet. On this score alone, it could be legitimately asked why Iraqi oil must be shipped through one specific means or another if the prime purpose of any such sale is to solve some of Iraq's pressing humanitarian needs and compensate victims of the Gulf war. There is no reasonable humanitarian or administrative justification that we are able to see or detect between permitting Iraqi oil sales under international supervision and confining shipments through a specific pipeline. The only visible explanation is that there must be other considerations than humanitarian or control related agenda that lie behind the decision to restrict oil sales through one outlet at the expense of all others which can also be internationally controlled and supervised.

The picture becomes even more troubling when it is discovered that revenues from the oil sales would be spent on Iraq's under international supervision not for the purpose of assuring their dispensation on humanitarian or equitable basis but rather on other grounds that seem to be purely political. A classic example of the incredible formula for revenue allocations under the resolution in question is the insistence that money earned by any such oil sale would be spent on regional basis within the country and under direct control and supervision of the U.N. In other words, the north of Iraq, the home of Iraqi Kurds, would receive direct financial aid generated by the sale of oil from the international organisation without the Iraqi authorities having any say in the matter. The end result becomes obvious and indeed untenable. The de facto separation of the north would end up being financed and consolidated by Iraqi oil revenues. In a round about way, therefore, Baghdad is called upon to foot the bill of its own division and dismemberment. There is little wonder, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz was not able to stomach the international deal being repeatedly offered to his country for selling its oil even though that would be at the expense of his own hungry and sick people.

This is not meant to absolve the Iraqi regime from its prime responsibility for bringing the country and people to the irreversible disasters when it was obvious to all that catastrophe was in the making the minute Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait. For this much the Iraqi leadership can never be forgiven. But Baghdad can be forgiven for not accepting at face value the terms of Resolution 986 as it is presently construed because it has become clear that there is more in that "humanitarian" resolution than meets the eye, and Iraq is justified in being cautious about implementing it.

It is up to the U.N. now to offer something more concrete and more reasonable. The idea is not to make it impossible for Iraq to accept any and all offers. The goal is to help the Iraqi people survive under these extremely difficult circumstances.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i daily strongly criticised the Israeli authorities for barring a 500-member delegation from Jordan to cross into the West Bank and take part in celebrations in Nablus marking the end of occupation of that city. Israel's action can only strengthen the will and the determination of the peoples of the two sides of the River Jordan to help one another in the face of injustice, and mobilise their efforts and their potentials to end occupation for good, said Mahmoud Rimawi. The writer said Israel's action can by no means weaken the Jordanian and the Palestinian people as the only means to ensure stability and security for the region. Israel's prevention of the delegation, which included former ministers, deputies and senators, from entering the West Bank was by no means justified and has manifested the fact that the Israelis are not yet ready for genuine peace with either the Jordanians or the Palestinians, added the writer.

MOHAMMAD BARHOUM, a writer in Al Ra'i daily said Saturday that the end of the war in Bosnia came as a result of the U.S. interference in warring parties, and has therefore enhanced the credibility of the United States in world affairs. If the U.S.-led coalition of Western forces succeeds in enforcing the agreement signed in the past week in Paris, Europe will no doubt be safe again; and the Western alliance will prove that it is in control of the situation, said the writer. But if the war erupts again in the Balkans, it will be a catastrophe for the world community at large, because it will mean no power can ever stop regional strife whether in Europe or other parts of the world, he added.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Al Fanek

Economy to grow by 20 per cent in 3 years

THE MINISTER of finance told the Parliament that Jordan agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on a new programme of economic adjustment covering three years, 1996-1998, which are the remaining three years under the present seven-year programme, 1992-1998.

Describing the programme as new is an overstatement. After four years of year-to-year targets and measures, the IMF is now ready to approve a three-year package of reforms and objectives, the performance of which will be reviewed on yearly basis.

The new arrangement worked out with the IMF will satisfy a condition attached to the latest Japanese soft loan extended to Jordan. The loan can be withdrawn only when Jordan has a new adjustment programme approved by the IMF. With this three-year programme, Japan can rest assured that its financial help will not be used to delay the ongoing reform but to enhance it.

A major benefit which will accrue to Jordan under the new programme is that the Paris Club will no longer be called upon to reschedule installments falling due every year or every 18 months as was the case. It will agree to reschedule in advance all the installments falling due over the coming three years, thus showing its confidence that Jordan's commitment to carry on with reforms will be honoured.

The new programme will call for a rather high rate of economic growth, up to 6.5 per cent per annum instead of the 4.5 per cent envisaged by the original programme drawn around the end of 1991.

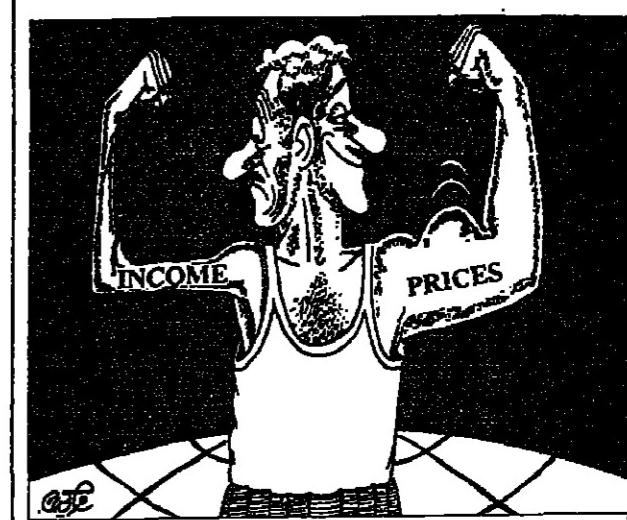
This ambitious objective indicates that most of the

required structural adjustment measures have already been implemented. Jordan crossed the point of no-return regarding the liberalisation of its economy and its market orientation. Time is now ripe to shift the emphasis from reforms to growth, in order to expand the economy by over 20 per cent in three years, before the extensive repayment of debts will start to take place in 1999 and beyond.

Jordan may experience during the coming three years a very high growth rate due to two reasons. First, the economy got rid of many distortions, restrictions and obstacles and is ready to take off. Second, Jordan is expected to receive sizeable transfers of capital in the form of grants, soft loans and private investments, which will make the target of such a high growth possible.

The salient features of the new programme will be the commercialisation of some public sector corporations and the privatisation of others, pricing government services such as water and electricity in a way to recover economic costs, and the adjustments needed by industry and agriculture to survive the impending fierce competition that comes with opening up to the global market.

Jordan will by no means be compelled to continue working with the IMF in formulating adjustment programmes. Most likely, Jordan will "graduate" by the end of 1998. The process of rescheduling will be terminated. All installments falling due after that date will be either related to new loans signed after the cut-off date of January 1, 1989 and consequently not eligible for rescheduling, or installments which were previously rescheduled in 1989 and thereafter, falling due as of 1999 and beyond, which are also not subject to rescheduling.



Will coffee prices fall tomorrow?

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

WITHOUT FURTHER ado, what's new with the coffee saga? Some new nasty developments have occurred. Let's evaluate our coffee logs so far.

We were told by the coffee importers (there are only four of them) last year that because of a bad harvest which decreased the supply of coffee, resulted in a world shortage of coffee and, as a result, coffee prices have increased worldwide. Therefore, coffee prices in Jordan must also increase.

Several months back coffee prices decreased "worldwide." Our very own consumer-loving Association of Foodstuff Traders (AFT) told the press that the coffee sold in Jordan had been bought at the "high prices" and until new quantities are bought at the new, low price, Jordan will have to bear-up and continue to compensate the merchant for his lack of foresight.

Last week, the Customs Department announced that shipping documents prove that the coffee being sold in Jordan had been bought at the new low prices. So some people, the coffee merchants, have been making a fortune out of gouging Jordanian coffee drinkers for at least three months.

Last Monday the AFT appealed to coffee merchants (retailers) to lower their prices to avoid interference by the Ministry of Supply. The merchants' greatest fear is a price ceiling on coffee like the one already imposed on tea.

The Ministry of Supply announced that if coffee prices do not fall by tomorrow then coffee will become subject to government pricing and a government imposed price ceiling will be enforced.

Based on the above it seems that all the concerned parties agree that there is no reason for coffee prices to remain high, and coffee prices will fall by hook or by crook. However, three questions come to mind: First, why do coffee merchants balk at lowering the price? Second, why are the retailers associations making statements to validate their actions instead of competing among themselves for customers? Third, if the coffee business is obviously so profitable why haven't any new Jordanian merchants recently entered this market to share in these profits?

The answer to the first question is straight forward: The coffee merchants have no incentive to lower prices and in fact will try to delay this action for as long as possible in order to continue to generate their monopoly profits. The money they will continue to make, under no penalty from the law, is hard to replace. These merchants should be turned in to the judicial system and they should be investigated for gouging the public. The fines they should pay for illegal price fixing should be commensurate with the gains made by engaging in anti-competitive behaviour.

A similar situation emerged the U.S. during Desert Storm when oil companies increased the price of oil one day after the invasion of Kuwait even

though all oil imported from the Middle East had been purchased two months earlier. The price hike was two months early. The oil producers were sued by consumer protection agencies and the federal government fined these firms an amount in the neighbourhood of \$400 million which went to the U.S. treasury. The same should apply in Jordan. The cases are almost identical. The traders should be given incentives not to rip-off defenceless consumers, and the government can use the extra cash.

The answer to the second question has been repeated in my writings here and elsewhere and it boils down to empirical fact: The coffee market is controlled by four importers who set their prices in collusion with each other. This is evidenced in letter to the retailers published last week in the Arabic press. Joint actions as to price alliance to collusion. Collusion in pricing is not competition, but the reverse. By this token, the coffee market is an uncontrolled monopoly which needs to be regulated, and the producers' collusive behaviour needs to be made illegal. Price fixing by private sector parties will not only hamper development of a specific sector but will also destroy public faith in the private sector as whole.

Furthermore, allowing monopolistic practices to continue will cause the privatisation process to be halted as people assert that privatisation means the replacement of government monopolies by private monopolies. This would be a travesty: Both are inefficient and hurt the public.

The third question concerning the absence of entry of new importers to compete with the old established ones is also not difficult to answer and doesn't need more than a bit of speculation on our part. Imagine that you were to attempt to enter into the business of importing coffee. It is not a difficult affair, all you need is credit at the bank and a few dinars to spare. Your profit is a guaranteed 500 per cent plus: Where else can you get this kind of profit margin? Rational behaviour dictates entry so why hasn't there been a rush to this market? I believe the answer is that a de facto coffee cartel does not permit entry which is one of the dangers of having a monopoly in our midst.

Where is the consumer in all this? Sadly enough, the Jordanian consumer is non-reactive. The price goes up, he/she pays the price. The price goes down he/she still pays the price. These are either signs of an addictive behaviour whereby every good becomes a necessity or indications of an inability to voice one's own opinion. Both behaviour traits are not healthy.

Where is the Consumer Protection Agency? It too is moving very slowly. This slowness is costing the consumer his/her livelihood and the squandering of Jordan's scarce resources on inefficient consumption.

Having said all the above, one must see the necessity of Jordanian antitrust laws. How else can we ensure that free market system will evolve in Jordan? Let's not wait too long.

'Putting the cart before the horse'

By Ammar Khammash

AT A RECENT speech at The Friends of Archaeology, the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Abdul Ilah Al Khatib, pointed the importance of Wadi Rum first as a site of tourism attraction and then as a site of natural importance. This makes it clear that the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities is "putting the cart before the horse."

Is tourism itself an attraction? If so then the ministry is on the right track. But if nature in Wadi Rum is attracting tourism then the minister should give priority to efforts that conserve the site. To conserve the source of attraction and manage a harmless tourism activities - something that we all agree is needed - is what sustainable tourism is all about. The ministry should manage the flow of tourism within Jordan and around sites of natural wealth and give priority of management within the area of natural conservation to ecologists, botanists, and other experts who are not directly under the pressure of touristic needs but rather technically dealing with the protection of the resource itself.

Examples of tourism

given more priority than conservation of touristic sites are seen all over Jordan. In Um Qais, the ministry has started preparing a parking lot. The job was tendered to a contractor who bulldozed an olive grove of the Ottoman period. Um Qais has lost a major olive grove of the 19th century and is now left with a Hellenistic wall with scores of the teeth of bulldozer, these are the remains of an era of fast decisions, of archaeology being dragged by short-sighted plans, and of placing touristic needs before protection.

After the clearing of the olive grove was done, someone found out that the buses cannot enter the narrow street in the modern part of the village. At this point the ministry started to plan for another road that will cut through the other remaining olive grove to the east of the Acropolis, which has a subterranean tomb furnished with sarcophagi and swinging basalt door.

Given tourism the priority over archaeology has also motivated the ministry to think of opening the site of Um Qais as "international excavation site" to excavate and finish all for total display of city to tourists, in this thrust which is driven

by the tourism market the Department of Antiquities and other international Archaeological institutions as well as individuals who live in Um Qais for years and invested a lot of efforts and emotions are all kept on the periphery; tourism comes first, and then follows scientific excavation, publication, conservation and site interpretation.

If with every change of government we see that much changes as we have seen in Um Qais, then there will be in few years more physical remains added by the ministry on archaeological sites than archaeology itself.

Dhana Project has regarded conservation as more important than access to the site but it still has them both. When Mr. Khatib says that "Dhana was an expensive project" then he is underestimating the price of natural/cultural site degradation or even loss. We are obviously selling cheap. Aiming for the fast dollar; we are uprooting and selling the olive tree as wood for immediate profit rather than waiting for the eternal, annual olive.

In the absence of a national park authority and the existence of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN)

created an atmosphere of confusion and mistrust that threatened to have lasting consequences.

When Yugoslavia fell apart in 1991, European nations — high on post-cold war euphoria and dreams of closer integration — told Washington they could handle the crisis in their own backyard. They turned out to be wrong.

The United States at first stayed aloof, then got into trouble with its allies and Moscow by suggesting NATO air strikes twinned with rearming Bosnia's Muslim-led government.

Accused by the Europeans of sniping from the sidelines, Washington then effectively scuppered a 1993 peace plan and consistently refused to join key allies like France and Britain in putting troops on the ground in Bosnia as U.N. peacekeepers.

The international community will work with you to change the face of Bosnia," U.S. President Bill Clinton told leaders from former Yugoslavia at the Paris signing ceremony.

All of the major powers agreed on one thing — that full-scale military intervention was too risky.

Instead, the lightly armed U.N. "blue helmets" were left in an impossible position, as the Bosnian Serbs and others broke agreements and ceasefires as if they had never existed,

Big powers hope Bosnia deal also ends their pain

By Nicholas Doughty
Reuter

PARIS — For the United States, Russia and West European powers, the treaty ending the Bosnian war offers the chance to heal self-inflicted wounds after more than three years of squabbling and humiliation.

Leaders from the major powers put on an impressive display of united resolve in Paris on Thursday, lining up to pledge cash, troops and moral support to make sure the peace lasts.

The United States, France and Britain are providing the backbone of a 60,000-strong force, led by the NATO alliance, to implement the Bosnia deal.

With Germany, Russia and others, they are discussing a multi-billion dollar reconstruction package.

"The international community will work with you to change the face of Bosnia," U.S. President Bill Clinton told leaders from former Yugoslavia at the Paris signing ceremony.

Not long ago, the picture was rather different. Differences between the United States, its European allies and Russia, as well as arguments between NATO and the United Nations, were seriously battered. Trans-Atlantic ties, solid in decades of East-West confrontation, were fast fraying.

It was not until this year that events on the ground, coupled with war-weariness

among the combatants, provided the opening that resulted in the U.S.-brokered peace deal.

The Bosnian war has shown that the line between traditional peacekeeping and military enforcement can become uncomfortably blurred, raising difficult questions about future U.N. peacekeeping missions and the involvements unthinkable a few years ago. New precedents have been set, old taboos broken.

NATO, a defensive alliance which never fired a shot in anger during the cold war, is now mounting its biggest operation in support of peace — and beyond its borders.

Germany has committed itself to taking part, breaking another taboo. Russian troops will work alongside the NATO command, as will forces from Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

And France, frustrated by European impotence in former Yugoslavia, announced last week that it would return to closer military links with the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organisation after almost 30 years of keeping a cool distance.

Features

King urges Iraqi dissidents to unite

(Continued from page 1)

"People who represent all the different mosaics that are Iraq should come together to send a message to every Iraqi to assure the Iraqis that national reconciliation is there and the Iraqis will remain together and maybe to give Iraqis some idea about what the future holds for them," King Hussein said.

"Our role is to tell them that if they have several different ideas and approaches, they should try to come together and put them together and act in the interest of Iraq," he said.

The King said that the people of Iraq were suffering as a result of both internal and external pressures.

On the internal front, "in the absence of democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights, Iraq has suffered tremendously" despite its vast oil wealth, he said.

On the external front, the sweeping international sanctions imposed on Iraq following its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait have "denied the Iraqi people of what they

need and require."

"We have always been extremely concerned with the situation in Iraq (and) the suffering of its people," said the King. "We have always been dedicated to the cause of alleviating their suffering."

The secretary said the Iraqi regime was continuing its efforts to build military weapons and referred to the interception in Amman last month of Russian-made gyroscopes destined for Iraq. The gyroscopes could be used in long-range missiles.

"Jordan has taken clear steps recently to make clear its opposition to Saddam," Mr. Christopher said. "Saddam is still making efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction as evidenced in the last few days."

He praised Jordan's "willingness to prevent that from happening the interception of some parts that were going" into Iraq.

Iraq has denied that it had ordered the gyroscopes, estimated to cost about \$25 million, and said a "Jordanian

agent" had offered to bring them to Iraq but the Baghdad government had turned down the offer.

Iraq has been under sweeping U.N. trade sanctions that ban all Iraqi exports and imports except food and medicine since it invaded Kuwait.

The Saddam regime remains in full control of Iraq while opposition groups are bickering among themselves, been plagued by infighting. Iraq's 20 million people are suffering due to the economic crisis brought on by the 1980-88 war with Iraq and the United Nations sanctions imposed.

"We share a very strong opposition to (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein," Mr. Christopher said.

Mr. Christopher said the U.S. supported the King's desire for Iraq to remain united and for steps to show "a unity" among those opposed to President Saddam.

"What the King is trying to do and what many are trying to do is to find the basis for most effectively doing that."

King honours officials

(Continued from page 12)

ceremony were Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasem, acting Governor of Aqaba Fayed Khawasneh, the commander of the southern military region and other senior officials.

King Hussein, who earlier visited areas affected by the tremors, said he arrived in Aqaba two days earlier and was reassured by officials at the municipality on the conditions in the city.

"Thank God, losses are almost negligible and are only cracks in some very limited buildings, which, seemingly, were not built in accordance with the construction codes followed in Aqaba," the King said.

He said panic struck several families in the city, leading them to evacuate their homes and live in tents, and added that this should not have been the case.

"This behaviour is in no way justifiable because buildings in this valley, which is known as an earthquake area, are designed to withstand quakes, King Hussein said. The various media institutions were to blame in making the people feel threatened in a way or another by showing damages caused by the quake in neighbouring countries, he said.

He said to reduce the consequences of tremors, there should be cooperation among the countries of the region and added that codes of construction should be followed strictly.

Mr. Christopher has refused to go into details, but the Israeli press has spoken of several scenarios including Israel's willingness to recognise Syrian sovereignty over the Golan.

Meanwhile, Mr. Christopher announced after his talks with Mr. Arafat that he would attend a Jan. 9 gathering of donor nations in Paris and repeated Washington's support for the first Palestinian elections on Jan. 20.

He also praised the swift implementation of the Israel-Palestinian accord signed on Sept. 28 to end Palestinian autonomy across the West Bank.

"There has been remarkable progress in establishing the institutions of self-government in Jericho," Mr. Christopher said. "We are very encouraged by the progress in implementing the interim agreement."

West Bank and Gaza Strip. "We confirm that we will pursue the Jihad until the total liberation of Palestine," declared Mohammad Saleh Taha, a Hamas official from the Burj refugee camp in Gaza.

"God commands us to fight our enemy," he said.

Mr. Taha reiterated Hamas' rejection of the PLO's autonomy agreements with Israel and its refusal to participate in the upcoming vote.

"We will never accept (the autonomy accords) because they do not guarantee us our minimum rights," he said.

"That is why we say clearly that we will not participate in the elections," he said, prompting claims of "we will not participate" from the crowd.

Mr. Taha said the Cairo talks would focus on an attempt to "carry on a serious dialogue with the Palestinian Authority to improve Palestinian society and ensure everyone's security."

He also welcomed the release by the self-rule authority this week of Hamas official Sayyed Abu Musameh, but added that "this is not enough."

Mr. Musameh's release had been a key pre-condition set by Hamas for attending the Cairo talks.

Hamas also reaffirmed that it would boycott the Palestinian elections.

The demonstration was called by Hamas to mark the eighth anniversary of the start of the Intifada.

The group issued its first tract on Dec. 14, 1987, several days after the anti-Israeli unrest erupted across the

West Bank and Gaza.

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GIA killed two leaders

(Continued from page 12)

More than 35,000 people have died in fighting since the government annulled elections in January 1992 that the FIS was poised to win.

Unidentified armed men meanwhile shot and killed retired Algerian Colonel Nourredine Zerdani while he was shopping at a market in the centre of town, family members reported Friday.

Zerdani, 63, the former head of military health services, was the fourth military officer to have been killed this month.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but the GIA has claimed several assassinations of military personnel in the past.

There has been a resurgence of violence in Algeria since the Nov. 16 election of President Liamine Zeroual, appointed head of a caretaker government last year. The balloting registered a large turnout despite threats by rebels to kill voters.

Among the more bloody

acts of the four-year-old conflict, the GIA claimed responsibility for a bomb attack last January in Algiers in which at least 42 people died and nearly 300 were wounded.

It also hijacked a French airliner last December and then murdered four priests in Algeria to avenge the hijack failure.

Said and Redjam were killed in GIA stronghold some 70 kilometres southwest of Algiers.

Said was a leading figure in the FIS before it was outlawed. He was arrested in July 1991 when heavily armed police stormed a news conference in Algiers at which he told journalists he had taken over the FIS leadership to fill the gap caused by the earlier arrests of its original leaders.

Aged about 48, Said — whose real name was Lounis Blekacem — was later jailed for 10 years but after several months in custody resurfaced as one of the leaders of the

Russia's Leninists plot their comeback

By Alastair MacDonald
Reuter

ST PETERSBURG — Smolny, the leafy Petrograd district that Lenin made the command centre of the Russian revolution, has come full circle.

The city has changed its name from Leningrad to St. Petersburg. Its liberal mayor now sits in the Smolny institute, the school for young ladies requisitioned by the Bolsheviks as their headquarters in the October uprising.

"We are the communists. Not pink, not brown. But real red communists," he told Reuters, branding Zyuganov both a social democrat and a national socialist who had abandoned Lenin's precept of an international brotherhood of revolution.

In a cramped, dusty little room in the same building, Yuri Terentyev is planning to turn the clock back.

Under a portrait of the Bolshevik leader and red banners proclaiming the slogan of 1917 — "power to the people," "workers of the world unite" — the local secretary of the Russian Communist Workers' Party (RKRP) proudly claims Lenin's mantle and warns of a new revolution if socialism is not restored soon.

"Liberalism destroys any state. It has destroyed our state, sooner or later it will destroy your (Western) states," he said.

"Only communism can save mankind... democracy

is the foundation of fascism."

An affable and articulate engineer, Mr. Terentyev dismisses Gennady Zyuganov's Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) as too right-wing. The KPRF is widely expected to become the biggest group in parliament after elections on December 17.

In an unconscious echo of his fellow tenant's advertising slogan, Mr. Terentyev insists his party is "the real thing."

"We are the communists. Not pink, not brown. But real red communists," he told Reuters, branding Zyuganov both a social democrat and a national socialist who had abandoned Lenin's precept of an international brotherhood of revolution.

In an unreconstructed determination to recreate the Soviet Union, renationalise the economy, scrap parliament and redistribute the national wealth puts the RKRP at the extreme left of Russia's political spectrum.

Viktor Anpilov, a rousing street-corner orator in the best Leninist tradition, is its best-known national figure.

He was jailed for his part in the 1993 parliamentary uprising against President Boris Yeltsin, which led to the party being barred from that year's election, handing Zyuganov's group the chance to monopolise communist representation in

planned for a logistics nightmare in Bosnia and neighbouring countries which the troops will cross from bases in Western Europe.

Bosnia is a mountainous country with a limited network of narrow roads and wrecked bridges, impossible to repair during the fighting.

The alliance deployment is taking place in the worst of the winter months, with units on the ground still uncertain of the reception awaiting them from local armies often under the sway of truculent warlords.

"Sixty thousand people — and stuff — passing through these countries into Bosnia-Herzegovina is an eye-

opener," said General Bill Farmer, the force's support commander.

"How you orchestrate it so you don't damage the transport arteries and you don't create chaos for people ... is something that is a daily concern for us."

The man who will command NATO's ground troops in Bosnia, British Lieutenant-General Michael Walker, stressed his men would be prepared to fight to enforce the peace deal.

"Our aim is to go and help those people develop peace in their country and the chances of doing that are probably better than they ever have been," he said in

Germany.

But he added: "Everyone must understand that there is a clear willingness by my forces to use the war-fighting systems that we are taking with us."

IFOR is supervising a peace treaty under which a Muslim-Croat federation takes control of 51 per cent of Bosnia with the rest occupied by Serbs who resisted independence from former Yugoslavia.

The main difficulty for the smooth implementation of the agreement is a plan to hand Serb suburbs of Sarajevo back to the control of the government.



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Report: Asia shifting focus away from dollar to yen

TOKYO (AFP) — Asia's currency authorities appear to have shifted their focus away from the U.S. dollar towards the yen to counter inflationary pressures and to protect foreign debt holdings, Japan's Economic Planning Agency (EPA) has said.

In its white paper on the world economy, the EPA noted that as the U.S. dollar depreciated against the yen in the first half of 1995, "many Asian currencies actually strengthened against the dollar... which is different from the usual reaction to dollar depreciation phases."

It said currency authorities had chosen to follow the yen, rather than the dollar, to reduce inflationary pressures due to the growing Japanese share of the Asian import market, up from 18.1 per cent in 1985 to 22.1 per cent in 1993.

The EPA said another reason was that depreciation of the yen would make yen-based debt increase in dollar or local currency terms.

"The falling share of Asian exports on the U.S. market — down from 25.7 per cent in 1985 to 22.3 per cent in 1993

— might allow these currencies to appreciate against the dollar," it said of the decimating reliance on dollar-denominated markets.

Mitsuru Taniguchi, director of overseas research at the EPA and author of the white paper, said: "Because of those elements we have seen some delinking (from the dollar)."

EPA tables showed that Malaysia allowed the ringgit to climb nearly 10 per cent against the dollar, and as a consequence saw only about a 10 per cent fall against the yen, while the Indonesian rupiah, which followed the dollar down, suffered a near 20 per cent depreciation against the Japanese unit.

Other economies to let the dollar slide were South Korea, Singapore, China, Taiwan and Thailand.

Hong Kong, which pegs its dollar to the greenback, had little alternative and suffered a more than 15 per cent slide against the yen.

In 1985, when the yen appreciated sharply with the Plaza Accord, when the dollar's value was pushed down on world foreign exchange markets, Asian currencies

depreciated by more than 15 per cent and as much as 25 per cent against the Japanese unit as they followed the U.S. dollar down.

Mr. Taniguchi said the indications were that "the current trend would continue... the linkage between the Asian currencies and the U.S. dollar would be weaker."

The growing preference for Asian currencies to follow the yen rather than the dollar poses the oft-asked question of the yen replacing the greenback as at least a regional unit of exchange.

"In the Asian region the yen can be a very promising candidate, but the yen has its own problems," Mr. Taniguchi said, adding: "There is still the fact that the dollar is more convenient to use."

"But if Japanese financial markets can be deregulated further so that the yen would be an easier to use currency, then gradually it is possible that the use of the yen would increase," he said. "My personal view is that such a development can only occur very gradually."

EU paves way for trade accord with South American countries

MADRID (AFP) — The European Union (EU) and the fledgling South American trade bloc Mercosur Friday signed a landmark cooperation agreement designed to pave the way for a free trade accord.

The deal between the 15-nation union and Mercosur, which comprises Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, contains no immediate trade liberalisation measures or EU aid to Mercosur. Still, it marks the first such economic and political cooperation agreement between two regional customs unions.

The accord was signed by foreign ministers of Mercosur, formally called the Southern Cone Common Market, and EU leaders. "Starting today, our transatlantic links will have a firm component directed towards the south of the American continent," Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez said.

Although the accord contains no firm measures to lower trade barriers, analysts say it signals the European Union's intention not to lose

out to the United States in the burgeoning Latin American market.

The two sides agreed to try to reach a free trade accord in two stages ending in 2005. An earlier EU plan to negotiate such a deal with the farm-rich Mercosur countries fell apart because of jitters in EU Mediterranean countries dependent on EU farm subsidies.

The EU says the agreement seeks to promote closer relations between the two regional integration processes in the political, economic, commercial, technological and other fields.

Created in 1991 and with a combined population of 195 million people, the Mercosur group is a sprawling economic powerhouse that hopes to grow stronger by taking in more members. In 1992 it was the world's fourth largest economic power in terms of gross domestic product, and in 1994 had a combined GDP of \$715 billion.

The European Union is Mercosur's main trade partner, buying up 27 per cent of South Cone exports in 1994, spelling doom for EU farmers trying to compete with the South Americans.

The EU statement said a future free-trade deal would be based on "gradual and reciprocal liberalisation of all trade, taking account of the sensitivity of certain products and World Trade Organisation rules."

THE Daily Crossword by Fran Ragus

ACROSS

1 "Much — About..."

4 Nibble

8 Area unit: abbr.

12 Noted soccer player

14 Algerian seaport

15 Award-winning play by Peter Shaffer

16 Candid

17 Go ashore

18 Resembling

19 Things to mind

21 Riding whips

22 Barnako's land

23 Dionne children, briefly

24 Merrymaking

27 Fencing position

28 — Park

(Edison's home)

29 Cite

30 Aries

33 Long periods

34 Whales: Fr.

35 Stack

36 Agree, in a way

37 Search

38 Eye and Fonda

39 Peers

41 Cleanses

42 Violent

windstorm

43 Bombreck

44 Wriggle

45 — John, M.D."

48 Charlatan

49 Blessing

50 Make revisions

52 Marine

measures: abbr.

53 Chance

54 Record

55 Shriek note

56 Quaffs

57 Crew members

DOWN

1 GI address

2 Actor Johnny

3 Corrida shouts

4 Without fear

5 Inhabitant of

Baghdad

6 Basks

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Consumer protection society to press for lower coffee prices

By Francesca Ciriaci
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP) is going to call a press conference on Wednesday to urge Jordanians to renounce drinking coffee for one week, according to Mohammad Obeidat, president of the NSCP, because even though coffee prices decreased on the international market, coffee prices in the Kingdom remained unchanged.

"According to the information we accurately collected,

for the last eight months coffee merchants have made between 60 and 70 per cent profit, at the expense of Jordanian consumers," Dr. Obeidat said.

We asked the importers many times (to lower their prices) and they wouldn't listen. Now it is time for Jordanian consumers to stand up and fight for their rights.

According to media reports, although the coffee business has been profitable over the last months, there have not been new importers entering the market and there are only four coffee

merchants in the Kingdom.

According to a study conducted by the NSCP on a sample of 3,000 housewives all over the Kingdom, 85.6 per cent of them agreed on the boycott for one week.

"Political parties, unions and associations contacted us and asked for coordinating our efforts to exert pressure on the government and the coffee merchants," Mr. Obeidat said.

According to officials at the Ministry of Supply, the ministry and the coffee merchants will be holding a meet-

ing on Monday to adjust coffee prices.

"We heard that coffee prices will go down half a dinar. If that will be the result of Monday's meeting, we will not be satisfied at all," Dr. Obeidat said, adding that, according to the result of studies conducted in the international market, the cof-

fee prices should not exceed JD 3 for the best brand, JD 2.75 for the medium and JD 2.50 for the lowest quality.

Current coffee prices in the Kingdom range from JD 4.5 to JD 6 per kilogramme.

Mr. Obeidat told the Jordan Times he was pessimistic about the influence of the

Ministry of Supply on the coffee merchants. "For many products there is no full competition. Before fixing price ceilings the government should introduce a law to prevent monopoly," Dr. Obeidat said. "One cannot talk about free economy without having an anti-trust law."

Saudi prince acquires 50% of Four Seasons Hotel

DUBAI (R) — Saudi billionaire Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal has acquired 50 per cent equity in the property that houses the Four Seasons Hotel "Inn On The Park" in London for \$50 million, his office said Saturday.

The 38-year-old prince, a nephew of King Fahd, already has substantial investment holdings in the hotel industry — he owns 25 per cent of Four Seasons-Regent Group, the office added in a statement from the Saudi capital Riyadh.

Four Seasons said Friday its 50 per cent interest in the Four Seasons Hotel London — for sale since the end of 1993 — was sold to a company controlled by the prince.

The statement said the prince's interest in the hotel industry dated from July 1994 when he acquired 50 per cent of Fairmont Hotels based in San Francisco, California, forming an equal partnership with Richard Swig, owner

and previous chairman.

The prince currently chairs the board of directors of Fairmont Management Co. with Mr. Swig as vice-chairman.

In September 1994 Prince Waleed reached an agreement with the founder and controlling shareholder of Four Seasons-Regent Group to acquire a 25 per cent stake for \$120 million.

In April, the prince and CDL International Group of Singapore acquired for \$325 million a majority stake of 80 per cent in Plaza Operating Partners Ltd which owned and operated the Plaza Hotel in New York.

The Plaza is now managed by the Fairmont Hotel Management Co., the statement said.

Prince Waleed owns nearly 25 per cent by the Euro Disney and in U.S. bank Citicorp's largest single shareholder.

He is credited with putting the once-troubled Euro Dis-

ney Theme Park outside Paris back on its feet when he scooped up a 25 per cent stake when it was in the doldrums in June 1994.

In July he bought a stake in Silvio Berlusconi's Italian media empire.

In October, lending banks owning Canary Wharf agreed to sell the London riverside office complex to a consortium of North American and Middle Eastern investors including the prince.

He once said his strategy was to invest "significant amounts of capital... with superior management teams around the world."

Among his other holdings are interests in U.S. retailer Saks Fifth Avenue, and in United Saudi Commercial Bank, of which he is chairman.

He has also orchestrated takeovers and mergers of often troubled industrial, supermarket and livestock companies.

UAE investors rush for new offset ship venture

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Investors in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are rushing to buy shares in a new shipyard venture set up under pre-offset deal involving the U.S. Newport News shipbuilding company, dealers said Saturday.

Share floatation by the Abu Dhabi Shipbuilding Company (ADSC) has been oversubscribed by more than three times although the deadline for the purchase expires on Dec. 24, the dealers in the stock market said.

"There is a very strong demand for the company's shares and the capital could be oversubscribed by more than five times by Dec. 24 as it has already exceeded three-fold," stockbroker Zuhair Kaswani told AFP.

"There are several reasons for such a rush. The market is thirsty for new share issues and it is awash with liquidity as many investors had been bracing for plans by the government to privatise some institutions," he said.

ADSC is floating 72 million dirhams worth of shares to the public while the rest of the authorised capital of 175 million dirhams (\$47.6 million) was paid by the UAE government and Newport News.

The U.S. firm, one of the

bigest shipbuilding companies in the world, had offered the pre-offset shipyard project in the hope it would be awarded a multi-billion-dollar contract to supply the UAE navy with frigates as part of the Gulf country's plans to beef up its arms.

Experts said it would be the biggest shipbuilding venture in the Gulf as the two other main drydocks in Bahrain and Dubai are involved only in repair and maintenance of oil tankers and other commercial vessels.

The UAE introduced offset programmes a few years ago in a bid to attract technology and diversify its oil-reliant economy. They stipulate that arms suppliers must reinvest in local projects that could produce up to 60 per cent of the weapons deal's value in a specific period of time.

Newport News controls 40 per cent of ADSC. The government owns 18.5 per cent while the rest is being subscribed by national institutions and individual investors.

The company, based in the port of Musaffah near Abu Dhabi, will start operations with the repair and building of small vessels in 1996 and will later be involved in major operations, such as building medium-sized ships and oil rigs.

"It will also support the military sector in the country. So it will play a key role in defence and security," owners said last week.

Financial Markets

Jordan Times
in co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin
Date: 16/12/1995

| Currency | Bid | Offer |
|----------------|--------|--------|
| U.S. Dollar | 0.7100 | 0.7100 |
| Sterling Pound | 1.0867 | 1.0921 |
| Deutsche Mark | 0.4900 | 0.4925 |
| Swiss Franc | 0.6078 | 0.6108 |
| French Franc | 0.1424 | 0.1431 |
| Japanese Yen* | 0.6933 | 0.6958 |
| Dutch Guilder | 0.4376 | 0.4398 |
| Swedish Krona | | |
| Italian Lira* | 0.0444 | 0.0446 |
| Belgian Franc | | |

* per 100

| Currency | Bid | Offer |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| Deutsche Mark | 1.8620 | 1.8780 |
| Lebanese Lira* | 0.043835 | 0.044500 |
| Saudi Riyal | 0.1870 | 0.1894 |
| Kuwaiti Dinar | 2.3070 | 2.3670 |
| Qatari Riyal | 0.1932 | 0.1945 |
| Egyptian Pound | 0.2100 | 0.2200 |
| Oman Riyal | 1.4350 | 1.4410 |
| UAE Dirham | 0.1922 | 0.1945 |
| Greek Drachma* | 0.2775 | 0.3125 |
| Cypriot Pound | 1.5100 | 1.5005 |

* per 100

Other Currencies

Date: 16/12/1995

| Currency | Bid | Offer |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| Deutsche Mark | 1.8620 | 1.8780 |
| Lebanese Lira* | 0.043835 | 0.044500 |
| Saudi Riyal | 0.1870 | 0.1894 |
| Kuwaiti Dinar | 2.3070 | 2.3670 |
| Qatari Riyal | 0.1932 | 0.1945 |
| Egyptian Pound | 0.2100 | 0.2200 |
| Oman Riyal | 1.4350 | 1.4410 |
| UAE Dirham | 0.1922 | 0.1945 |
| Greek Drachma* | 0.2775 | 0.3125 |
| Cypriot Pound | 1.5100 | 1.5005 |

* per 100

Financial Markets

Jordan Times
in co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

| Currency | Bid | Offer |
|----------------|--------|--------|
| U.S. Dollar | 0.7100 | 0.7100 |
| Sterling Pound | 1.0867 | 1.0921 |
| Deutsche Mark | 0.4900 | 0.4925 |
| Swiss Franc | 0.6078 | 0.6108 |
| French Franc | 0.1424 | 0.1431 |
| Japanese Yen* | 0.6933 | 0.6958 |
| Dutch Guilder | 0.4376 | 0.4398 |
| Swedish Krona | | |
| Italian Lira* | 0.0444 | 0.0446 |
| Belgian Franc | | |

* per 100

| Currency | Bid | Offer |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| Deutsche Mark | 1.8620 | 1.8780 |
| Lebanese Lira* | 0.043835 | 0.044500 |
| Saudi Riyal | 0.1870 | 0.1894 |
| Kuwaiti Dinar | 2.3070 | 2.3670 |
| Qatari Riyal | 0.1932 | 0.1945 |
| Egyptian Pound | 0.2100 | 0.2200 |
| Oman Riyal | 1.4350 | 1.4410 |
| UAE Dirham | 0.1922 | 0.1945 |
| Greek Drachma* | 0.2775 | 0.3125 |
| Cypriot Pound | 1.5100 | 1.5005 |

* per 100

Other Currencies

Date: 16/12/1995

Financial Markets

Jordan Times
in co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin
Date: 16/12/1995

Currency

Bid

Offer

Deutsche Mark

1.8620

1.8780

Lebanese Lira*

0.043835

0.044500

Saudi Riyal

0.1870

0.1894

Kuwaiti Dinar

2.3070

2.3670

Qatari Riyal

0.1932

0.1945

UEFA chief says game is 'in a mess'

BIRMINGHAM (R) — UEFA President Lennart Johansson said soccer was "left in a mess" by Friday's court ruling that showed the red card to the sport's system of transfers and limits on foreigners.

A five-year legal fight by Belgian player Jean-Marc Bosman led to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruling that current restrictions broke European Union (EU) laws and that soccer players were entitled to the same freedom of movement as other EU workers.

It said the transfer system, under which clubs can charge money for their players even at the end of their contracts, restricted this freedom.

Johansson, the Swedish head of European soccer's ruling body, said at a news conference at the end of a UEFA executive committee meeting here: "The whole thing will create a mess for football."

"Our task is to represent not only the top countries, the top clubs and top players but football as a whole. There are a few winners but a helluva lot of losers with this verdict."

"I am glad to see that most of you understand this is an attack on football and we have implications we cannot foresee. It can mean that we destroy the transfer system we have had for 100 years."

"Today the players are an asset on their clubs' balance sheets who have paid billions for them. Tomorrow they will not be assets."

As well as defining that an out-of-contract player is free



Belgian soccer player Jean-Marc Bosman (right), who claimed the transfer system and restrictions affecting players moving across Europe were illegal, and his lawyer Jean-Louis Dupont (left) smile after the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruled that soccer's system of transfers and its limits on foreign players were against European Union Law (Reuters photo)

European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruled that soccer's system of transfers and its limits on foreign players were against European Union Law (Reuters photo)

to move from one EU state to another, the Luxembourg decision also means there are no longer restrictions on the number of foreign players a team can field in a domestic match.

But such restrictions still apply to matches in the European Cup Champions' League, the UEFA Cup and Cup Winners' Cup.

Dutch Euro MP Jimmy Janssen Van Ray, who has been actively involved in the Bosman case, commented: "I'm very happy that modern

slavery has been abolished. I praise Bosman for his courage in taking on the powerful federations. David has beaten Goliath."

Reaction around the rest of Europe, not to mention inside FIFA headquarters, was generally less enthusiastic.

World soccer governing body FIFA expressed "disappointment" at the decision, but stressed it affected just 18 of the 193 national associations under their worldwide control.

Bosman's case will now re-

turn to a Belgian appeals court to assess the level of damages the player is seeking from UEFA, the Belgian soccer union and his former club FC Liege for allegedly blacklisting him from soccer and prematurely ending his career.

Most observers had believed Bosman would win his case, which started in 1990 when Belgium's Liege blocked a transfer to France's Dunkirk. Liege later suspended Bosman, who then went to court.

Lennart Johansson, the president of the European Football Association (UEFA), said: "We believe that the decision is a good one for football and for the European Union."



Steffi Graf

Graf undergoes operation, out of Australian Open

BONN (R) — World number one Steffi Graf will be unable to play in the Australian Open next month after undergoing an operation for a chipped bone in her left foot on Friday, her surgeon said.

"The patient wants to give herself enough time over the next few weeks to carry through the rehabilitation pro-

gramme fully and without suffering further physical complaints," Hartmut Krahl of Essen's Alfred Krupp Hospital said in a statement.

Graf, 26, who has won the Australian Open four times,

had a similar operation on her right foot two years ago.

Jordan Times
Tel: 684311/
699634



Gifts Corner introduces Poème
Lancome company and its representative in Jordan, Ibrahim & Khaled Abu Shakra Trading Company, hosted a reception at the Marriott Hotel in Amman to launch Lancome's new Poème perfume in the Jordanian market. The reception was attended by several businessmen, journalists and those interested in the world of perfumes and fashions. Following the reception, Ibrahim & Khaled Abu Shakra Company started a training course at the hotel for the company's sales staff to familiarise them with the latest products by Lancome of France. On the sidelines of the course, a press conference was held by Lancome's Tanya Ya'coubi. Ms. Ya'coubi noted that while the company celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, it launches Poème as its 30th perfume. Lancome presents Poème, French for poem, to make this perfume as a spiritual means of communication as is poetry, and to make it as a means of expressing love. Lancome's other products include Magic Noir and Tresor, with the latter being offered by the Abu Shakra company 1991.

Thailand's golden harvest at SEA Games ends Indonesian streak

CHIANG MAI, Thailand (AP) — Maybe it's the depth, maybe it's the home court advantage. But as the 10-nation Southeast Asia Games wind down to a close, one thing is certain — Thailand rules. At least for now.

On the eighth day of the nine-day games, the hungry hosts have gobbled up the gold in everything from snooker to shooting — 133 in all — and demonstrated that they are once again the country to beat in this part of the world.

Thousands of fans poured into the 20,000-seat 700 year stadium, the centerpiece of the games here in the lush hills of northern Thailand, to watch what they hoped would be yet another triumph for

their country — in soccer. Interest in the soccer competition has been so high that a mob of fans seeking seats for the sold-out final went on a rampage Friday, burning down two tents near the main stadium before giving up and going home.

Thailand, the defending games' champion, played Vietnam.

The Thais are stronger because they train harder," said Indonesian shooting team manager Suprapto Harianto. "Indonesia only started training three months before. If we had trained longer, we would have won."

The Indonesians have also

Yayuk Basuki, ranked 24th in the world, the Indonesian are competing with a relatively inexperienced and unprepared team.

"The Thais are stronger because they train harder," said Indonesian shooting team manager Suprapto Harianto. "Indonesia only started training three months before. If we had trained longer, we would have won."

The two countries shared the most golds in silat olahraga, a regional martial art similar to karate or kung-fu, which accounted for 15 of the day's medal events.

The Philippines, which is in third place in the gold race with 31, took the men's basketball gold.

Other gold-laden sports Saturday were gymnastics, yachting and badminton, the Indonesian team had 71 golds, compared with the 88



Austria's Alexandra Meissnitzer is on her way to clock a combined time of 2:07.19 (Reuters photo)

Boca fans turn against Maradona

BUENOS AIRES (R) — The fan club of temperamental soccer superstar Diego Maradona is shrinking rapidly.

A radio talk show poll gave him little support over his threat to quit Boca Juniors after the club decided to offer the coaching job to former Seville and Argentine national coach Carlos Bilardo.

The poll showed only 13 per cent of Boca fans had a good image of Maradona, while 33 per cent had a mediocre image.

And 42 per cent cannot stand him.

Almost 52 per cent wanted Bilardo to be appointed coach, but only a third wanted Maradona to stay in the team.

Maradona has given them ample reason for disappointment.

Coming back from a 15-month playing ban for failing a 1994 World Cup dope test, Maradona at first breathed unity into a squabbling Boca team which rushed to a six-point lead at the top of the table with four league games to go.

wards conditions had been ideal for her run.

"Yesterday we analysed the (Friday) run. I found I had suffered lapses of concentration. Today I concentrated well on the course," she said.

Meissnitzer, 23, meanwhile confirmed her status as the rising star of the Austrian squad having come third in Friday's first run.

First in the Super-G and second in the giant slalom at Val d'Isere, confirmed her position as a serious challenger to Germany's Katja Seizinger, who currently tops the World Cup standings just ahead of her.

Goetschl, 20, is also in with

a shout following Saturday's performance. She has three career victories to date — one each in the giant slalom, the slalom and the combined.

Meissnitzer said she was surprised to have come in second, saying: "I made some mistakes."

She added that the Austrian team's performance "confirms the good team we have developed. We have worked well and hard, above all concentrating on technique."

U.S. star Picabo Street, who Friday came in a disappointing 13th, returned to something more like her usual form Saturday in tying for third with Goetschl.

Austrian women dominate downhill

ST. ANTON (AFP) — Michaela Dorfmeister, Alexandra Meissnitzer and Renate Goetschl gave Austria's women skiers their first one-two-three finish for 11 years here Saturday in the World Cup downhill.

Dorfmeister, 22, scored her first World Cup triumph, crossing the line in ahead of Meissnitzer and 0.18 ahead of Goetschl, who tied for third with Picabo Street of the United States.

The last Austrian triple came at Santa Caterina in 1984 courtesy of Elisabeth Kirchler, Veronika Vitzthum and Katrin Gutensohn in 1984.

Dorfmeister said after-

wards conditions had been ideal for her run.

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UEFA unhappy with Havelange suggestion

BIRMINGHAM (AFP) — The president of the European football authority UEFA, Lennart Johansson, said Friday he regretted a recent suggestion by FIFA head Joao Havelange that Africa could host the 2006 World Cup.

Speaking in Birmingham, where the European Championship draw is to be made at the weekend, Johansson said talk of who would host that tournament was completely premature.

He noted that football confederation presidents agreed there should be a rotation system by continent but had agreed to put off for now which continent would start that arrangement rolling.

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Sports

JORDAN TIMES, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1995

Ramtha tighten grip atop Premier League

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — At the end of the 13th week of the Kingdom's Premier League soccer competition Al Ramtha took a further lead atop the standings with 30 points after their crucial 1-0 win over rivals Al Hussein.

The top four standings changed considerably this week as Al Hussein dropped from second to fourth while Al Faisali moved one place to second after their 3-0 win over Sahab. Al Qadissieh also moved up one place to third after their 1-0 victory over Al Ahli.

Al Windat remained fifth after their 2-1 win over Al Jazeerah — an important win for the titleholders especially after their 2-2 draw with 11th place Al Jalil last week.

Kufrsoum's standing also remained unchanged but they tied Al Windat and Al Hussein with 23 points in the overall standings after their convincing 4-1 win over bottom-of-the-table Russifa. The defeat was Al Russifa's 13th and they still have no points in the overall standings.

Meanwhile, Al Baqaa scored an important 1-0 win over Al Jalil and moved to 9th place tying Al Ahli with 15 points.

Schedule of 14th week

| | Wed. 20/12 | Thurs. 21/12 | Fri. 22/12 | Fri. 22/12 | Fri. 22/12 |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Russifa-Hussein | | | | | |
| Jazreh-Jalil | | | | | |
| Qadissieh-Faisali | | | | | |
| Hussein | | | | | |
| Windat | | | | | |
| Kufrsoum | | | | | |
| Jazeerah | | | | | |
| Baqaa | | | | | |
| Ahli | | | | | |
| Sahab | | | | | |
| Jalil | | | | | |
| Russifa | | | | | |

STANDING AFTER 13TH WEEK

| | P | W | D | L | GF | GA | Pts |
|-----------|----|---|---|----|----|----|-----|
| Ramtha | 13 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 19 | 4 | 30 |
| Faisali | 13 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 20 | 8 | 25 |
| Qadissieh | 13 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 18 | 12 | 24 |
| Hussein | 13 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 25 | 10 | 23 |
| Windat | 13 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 21 | 13 | 23 |
| Kufrsoum | 13 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 18 | 10 | 23 |
| Jazeerah | 13 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 20 | 20 | 16 |
| Baqaa | 13 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 20 | 21 | 15 |
| Ahli | 13 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 16 | 12 | 15 |
| Sahab | 13 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 18 | 11 |
| Jalil | 13 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 11 | 29 | 5 |
| Russifa | 13 | - | - | 13 | 10 | 51 | - |

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A 753
V A 86
V K 43
4 J 742

WEST
A J 8
V 9 743
V Q 10 65
4 5
EAST
A Q 10 9 42
V J 10 5
V Q 9 7
5 Q 10 6

SOUTH
A K 6
V K Q 2
A 8 2
A K 9 8 3

Opening lead: Queen of ♦

"Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury:

"My client, Mr. South, stands before you accused of a heinous offense: cheating or looking at the opponent's cards. Of course, he is totally innocent of that charge."

"South reached three no trump after opening the bidding one club and being raised to two clubs by his partner. No one can say anything about my client's jump to three no trump."

"West led the queen of diamonds and, since declarer did not want a spade shift, dummy's king was played. Next came the jack of clubs, covered by the queen and taken with the king. Declarer returned to the table and, having had time to let another club, finessed the nine when East produced the five. Declarer was thus able to score all five club tricks and come home with an overtrick."

Gatti improved to 24-1, while Patterson fell to 54-4-1. Gatti floored Patterson with a right uppercut midway in the second round. Patterson, the adopted son of former world heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson, wobbled Gatti in the final rounds but had fallen too far behind in the scoring.

It is the prosecution's contention that South could not play the hand that way unless he "knew" the lie of the club suit, and that could be only by peeking. Hogwash! South was merely taking an avoidance play, a relatively elementary technique.

South needed only four club tricks to make his contract. South could not afford to have East gain the lead to play a spade through the king. The play in the club suit was designed to keep East off lead — South was quite prepared to let a club trick to West, if necessary. Thank you for your patience."

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, have you reached your verdict?"

"We have, Your Honor. South is guilty, but only of being a very good bridge player!"



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Kevin Costner
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WATERWORLD
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CINEMA TEL: 699238
PLAZA
Nadia Al Jundi, Farouq Fishawi
and Mahmoud Hamideh
in
**A Woman Who shook
the Throne of Egypt**
(Arabic)
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30.

CINEMA TEL: 677420
CONCORD
CONCORD "1"
Jacque Nicklson
& Michel Feifer....in
WOLF
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:15, 10:30
CONCORD "2"
Sylvester Stallone..in
ASSASSINS
Shows: 3:30, 6, 8:15, 10:15

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Shaq is back to lead Magic over the Jazz

ORLANDO (R) — Shaquille O'Neal starred in his own welcome back party on Friday by scoring 26 points and grabbed 11 rebounds in his first game of the season as the Orlando Magic silenced the Houston Jazz 111-110.

O'Neal, who averaged a league-best 29.3 points per game and 11.4 rebounds per game last season, had been sidelined since the pre-season with torn ligaments in his right thumb.

He made his season debut with a protective splint on his hand. In just 24 minutes of action coming off the bench, he hit 9-of-16 shots from the field and 8-of-16 free throws.

"I'm not in 100 per cent shape, so I'm probably going to take my time," said O'Neal. "It doesn't matter who starts the game. It matters who finishes it."

"Shaq just moved in and we kept on playing like we had been playing without him," said head coach Bryan Hill, whose Magic improved to 18-5. "The nice thing was he got his points in the flow of the offence. It wasn't like all of a sudden we ran everything through him."

"I wanted to see how he could handle 24 minutes. He probably could have handled more."

O'Neal showed a surprisingly soft touch when he wasn't making the backboard rattle with a thunderous dunk.

"He didn't look too tentative to me for a guy who's a power player anyway," said Jazz coach Jerry Sloan.

"They're so big and strong, obviously with O'Neal out there."

O'Neal scored 16 of his points in the first half when Orlando built a 55-45 lead.

Karl Malone led Utah with 24 points and 21 rebounds.

The Magic ran their unbeaten home record this season to 12-0 and won 19 in a row at home dating back to March 14.

In Vancouver, the Grizzlies also had cause for celebration as they snapped their 19-game losing streak with a 104-100 overtime victory over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Asdrubal Amaya hit three free throws in the final 2:07 of overtime and Bryant Reeves added 25 points and a season-high 17 rebounds for Vancouver, who avoided the distinction of tying the NBA single-season record of 20 straight losses.

Rod Strickland had 29 points and 13 assists for Portland.

In Houston, Mitch Richmond scored 256 of his



New York Knicks guard John Starks leaps in the first half of their NBA game at New York's Madison Square (Reuters photo)

NBA RESULTS

| | Boston | Toronto | 103 |
|------------|--------|--------------|----------|
| Detroit | 105 | New Jersey | 98 |
| Indians | 112 | Milwaukee | 95 |
| Washington | 122 | LA Lakers | 114 |
| Cleveland | 100 | Minnesota | 88 |
| Orlando | 111 | Utah | 99 |
| Sacramento | 114 | Houston | 110 |
| Seattle | 108 | Golden State | 101 |
| Vancouver | 104 | Portland | 100 (OT) |

At Washington, Chris

Webber scored nine of his career-high 37 points in an 18-2 fourth quarter run to lead the Washington Bullets to a 122-114 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers.

In Boston, Dino Radja

scored 31 points as the Celtics beat the Toronto Raptors 122-103 for their third straight win.

At Vancouver, Rik Smits

scored 12 first-quarter points

as the Indiana Pacers raced

out to a 20-point, first-

quarter lead and easily beat

the Milwaukee Bucks 112-95.

The Pacers built an early

16-2 and led 40-40 at half-

time.

Smits finished with 16

points and six rebounds,

playing sparingly in the

second half after a slight ankle sprain.

Glenn Robinson led the

Bucks in scoring with 22

points...

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EU leaders conclude 'most successful' talks

Madrid summit slowly opens door for ex-East bloc countries to negotiate their entry to EU

MADRID (Agencies) — European Union (EU) leaders set a target for negotiations with would-be member countries on Saturday and ended a two-day summit confident of having regained the initiative on plans for a single currency.

They listed milestones for the 15-nation bloc in the five years until the next century and decided to begin a review of their Maastricht Treaty on March 29 in Turin, Italy.

The summit capped Spain's six-month turn in the bloc's rotating presidency, which passes to Italy on Jan. 1, with what Foreign Minister Javier Solana proudly described as a splendid success — a view shared even by outsiders.

"It must have been one of their most successful summits in the last couple of years," said a non-EU diplomat.

One of the meeting's main achievements was to tackle the perception by financial markets that EU leaders may be wavering in their resolve to forge an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in the face of practical problems at the drafting stage.

Bolstered by interest-rate cuts by central banks around Europe and signs that anti-austerity protests in France were ebbing, they baptised the planned single currency "euro" and refined technical solutions needed for its birth in 1999.

Leaders of the 11 countries from Eastern Europe and the

Mediterranean who hope to join the bloc joined the EU leaders at the end of their summit, to be briefed on their plans.

The summit conclusions set out what the leaders called a political agenda to prepare for the new century, including enlargement, creating the single currency by Jan. 1, 1999 and reviewing EU treaties to make it all work.

"Success in all these tasks will mean that a large community enjoying the benefits of freedom, prosperity and stability can be set up Europe-wide," they said.

"Enlargement is both a political necessity and a historic opportunity for Europe," the conclusions state.

The EU leaders said they aspired to negotiations with some of the eastern states beginning in parallel with those with Cyprus and Malta, diplomats reported before the conclusions were officially released.

The two island states have been promised negotiations within six months of the conclusion of the EU conference to review the Maastricht Treaty.

The EU leaders met over lunch with counterparts from nine of the 10 former Soviet-bloc countries seeking entry, but setting a firm timetable for talks was ruled out beforehand.

They did, however, ask the European Commission, the

EU's executive arm, to have reports on the 10 would-be members ready by the end of next year's conference, which is supposed to reshape the EU's policies and institutions to cope with expansion.

A spokesman for the European Commission, Klaus van der Paes, denied earlier Saturday that the failure to set a date for enlargement talks sent a negative signal to former Soviet-bloc countries on the door of the elite European club.

"It was never envisioned that a firm date would be given here. It is far too early," he said.

The countries that have already filled formal applications to join the EU are Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

These countries have also signed so-called association agreements entitling them to aid to get ready for eventual membership. Such accords have also been signed or finalised by the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Slovenia.

The Central and Eastern European countries had been hoping for the same treatment as Malta and Cyprus, who were also represented at the luncheon.

The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are the favourites for early entry into the EU. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl has promised Poland membership by 2000.

King, honouring Aqaba officials for role in quake relief, says media should have been more accurate

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday praised efforts exerted by the concerned departments in Aqaba Governorate and their active role in dealing with the aftermath of the tremor which hit Aqaba along with other regions of the Middle East last month.

In an address before honouring a number of Aqaba officials in recognition of their role and efforts exerted to help the local population after the earthquake and aftershocks that hit the Aqaba region, King Hussein urged the mass media to verify information and avoid exaggeration in reporting such events and to be a model to be followed by other Arab countries.

The King said the media "should reflect the true image of the country and should work to preserve Jordan's gains and achievements in an atmosphere of democracy, political pluralism and human rights."

"This might be a good opportunity for me to thank my brother the governor, the commander of the southern region, and other brothers whom we have the chance to honour today for their field



His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday presents medals to Aqaba officials for their role in dealing with the impact of the recent earthquake and aftershocks that hit the port city (photo by Yousef Allan)

work in Aqaba during this critical period through which this dear city passed... and to thank all institutions which carried out their duties towards Jordanian citizens in the best manner," he said.

King Hussein conferred on

Aqaba Mayor Riad Al Helu the Jordanian Independence Medal of the First Order, Director of Aqaba Public Works Department Ali Noureddin Kurdi Al Kawkab Medal of the Third Order and head of the Civil Defence

Department in Aqaba Governorate Omar Tarawneh Al Kawkab Medal of the Third Order.

Present at the presentation

(Continued on page 7)

Government promises intensified battle against official corruption

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Implicitly acknowledging the existence of corruption in Jordan, the government on Saturday promised all efforts to secure transparency and integrity in the executive authority.

Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, in a speech delivered by Minister of Administrative Development Muhibeen Touq, said the government was serious in fighting corruption and maintaining integrity, especially that "no party can bear the cost of corruption and its effects locally or internationally."

The seminar, which was organised by the Ministry of Administrative Development in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, aims to draw up a practical strategy and an implementation

mechanism to fight corruption through benefitting from the successful experiences of countries such as Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, the U.S., Bolivia and Uganda.

Participants will exchange their experience with Jordanian officials, decision-makers, members of the Parliament, journalists and the private sector. Several of them said that fighting corruption should be backed by a political will and an initiative taken by those responsible for decision-making in the country.

Antonio de Lozada, a member of the Bolivian Senate, warned that unless the "ruling class" assumed responsibility in the building of a new society, "they would be the first to be wiped out when the blood-bath starts."

Participants stressed that political will was the only means through which corruption could be eliminated. They warned that unless serious measures are taken, destructive outcomes could be seen in the near future.

"Corruption in Jordan has spread everywhere and will affect the stability and the existence of the state and the regime," Sa'eed Tal, a former deputy prime minister, told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Tal added that the only authority which could take decisive action against corruption was His Majesty King Hussein.

Jordanian participants saw that certain institutions such as a centre for freedom, democracy and human rights should be developed and a law be adopted compelling new members in the executive authority to declare their

wealth. These suggestions, they added, could help tremendously in the fight against corruption.

"The proposed centre could help people to voice their grievance," Ibrahim Izzeddin, former minister of prime ministry affairs, told the Jordan Times.

He added that a law concerning the creation of the centre was still under consideration by the Cabinet.

Laila Sharaf, a member of the Senate, welcomed the suggestion that new ministers make a declaration of wealth. She described the suggestion as useful and important and said it could be a "decisive deterrent." But Mrs. Sharaf stressed that such declarations should be treated in strict confidentiality as "people will not like personal declarations to be public."

GIA reportedly kills two Islamic leaders

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Two Islamic fundamentalist leaders were executed by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) after a clash erupted between Algeria's rival extremist groups, a police informer told Algerian television Saturday.

The informer, whose name had not been revealed, said

Mohammad Said and Abdul Razak Redjam had been executed four months ago in Medea in the south of the country.

Members of the consultative council make recommendations on new laws and policies but have no legislative powers.

The official Gulf News Agency (GNA) said the emir's orders to release detainees, prisoners and allow exiles to return home were in a decree issued to coincide with the national day celebrations.

The decree, however, did not say how many people would be released or how many exiles were expected to return home.

The Bahraini capital Manama had a festive appearance for the national day celebrations. Office towers, hotels and government buildings were festooned with huge white-and-red Bahraini flags and thousands of portraits of the emir, some larger than life, decorated the streets.

Authorities in Bahrain have already freed close to 1,000 of the 1,400 people detained since protests erupted last December. The protesters demanded better job opportunities and also called for the restoration of a parliament that was dissolved in 1975 when it began to criticise the government.

The unrest continued intermittently for several months.

Saturday's decree said the protesters to be released and the exiles to return home have pledged not to break the law.

Sheikh Isa, whose country often accuses Shiite Iran of being behind the unrest, vowed to deal firmly with any fresh disturbances.

"I'm speaking of an irresponsible minority which does not recognise the very fragile line between democracy and

Saudi, Yemeni ministers try to resolve border row

RIYADH (Agencies) — Ministers from Saudi Arabia and Yemen met here Saturday in a fresh bid to resolve a long-running border dispute between the two countries, Saudi officials said.

The Saudi defence, interior and foreign ministers, Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz, Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz and Prince Saud Al Faisal, took part in the meeting with Yemeni Interior Minister Hussein Arab and Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani.

They were supposed to begin work on demarcating the border almost a month ago but were delayed by persistent differences of opinion, according to Yemeni sources.

The two neighbours signed a declaration of principles on February 26 to settle the dispute, whereby Yemen gave up its claim to the border provinces of Najran, Assir and Jizan, ceded to Saudi Arabia in 1934.

The move helped to ease tension between Riyadh and

Sanaa, stemming from Saudi accusations that Yemen supported Iraq during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis. Yemen in turn charged that Saudi Arabia supported a breakaway bid by southern Yemeni leaders during the May-July 1994 civil war.

The Yemeni team to the Riyadh talks was led by Parliament Speaker Abdullah Ben Hussein Al Ahmar.

Prince Sultan led his country in the talks.

Arab diplomatic sources in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the two sides had differences over the provisions of a proposed security protocol.

The proposed pact covers such issues as joint efforts to combat cross-border smuggling of drugs and the extradition of wanted criminals.

The dispute about the 2,000-kilometre border has consistently been a source of tension between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

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Mubarak wants 'national front' against extremists

CAIRO (Agencies) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak railed against "foreign plots" against Egypt on Saturday, calling on his people to form a national front against armed Muslim fundamentalists.

"I call on all Egyptians to be vigilant and to unite to form a national front against these organisations to prevent them from repeating their attacks," Mr. Mubarak said in his first address to the new parliament elected this month.

In a veiled reference to the Muslim Brotherhood and their political allies, Mr. Mubarak said it was "inconceivable that certain parties have transformed their newspapers into podiums calling for violence and terrorism."

"I'm speaking of an irresponsible minority which does not recognise the very fragile line between democracy and

chaos," Mr. Mubarak said. He called the groups' "mouthpieces for foreign powers that have screamed out their hatred of Egypt and transformed their nations into homes for violent groups and terrorism."

He praised the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), whose conflict resolution mechanism "will soon judge" a complaint by Ethiopia against Sudan, accused of sheltering militants who attempted to kill him in Addis Ababa.

"This is a matter we consider very important because it is linked to Sudan's involvement in a policy of protecting terrorism and exporting it to neighbouring nations," he said.

Mr. Mubarak accused Khartoum of working "with foreign powers in extremely dangerous plots" which "have transformed Sudan into an element of danger."

Sudan has become "a pit of death, bloodbaths and horror for innocents," he said.

"This is a situation which the Sudanese people cannot accept. We stand beside our twin brothers in refusing these conspiracies."

Mr. Mubarak was addressing a special opening of parliament, which groups both the 454-member People's Assembly and the 258-member consultative council, in a speech carried live on state television.

Mr. Mubarak also promised "a big leap" in his economic reform programme, which has been criticised as too slow moving to turn around the country's serious financial problems.

Mr. Mubarak defended the election for the new parliament, which was marked by violence and complaints.

COLUMN

Man who received baboon marrow cells is doing well

WASHINGTON (AFP) — 38-year-old AIDS patient who received the first baboon-to-human transplant of bone marrow cells was doing well Friday, doctors said. "Jeff Getty is in good condition. He's doing great. He slept very well and was very comfortable. He's now awake and enjoying a cup of French roast coffee," San Francisco General Hospital said in a statement. The transplant was done in hopes that the baboon's natural resistance to the AIDS virus would save his life. It is not known why baboons seem immune to the virus. The operation, which was similar to a blood transfusion, lasted about 30 minutes and took place Thursday. Although Mr. Getty was feeling fine, it was too early to tell if the transfusion would do any good. It also reignited controversy over using animal tissue in humans and angered animal-rights activists. Getty is an AIDS activist who has been fighting for the introduction of potential AIDS treatments and cures.

Doctors operate to give 7-year-old girl a smile

LOS ANGELES (R) — A seven-year-old California girl received an early Christmas present Friday when she underwent surgery aimed at giving her a smile. Chelsea Thomas, like about 1,000 other Americans, was born without the nerves or muscles needed to smile. The first stage of surgery began in a Los Angeles hospital Friday morning, directed by Toronto microvascular surgeon Ronald Zuker. It was not known yet if the operation was successful. Doctors transplanted a thigh muscle, complete with artery vein and nerves, to Chelsea's cheek and connected it from the cheek bone to the major muscle responsible for smiling. The newly-implanted muscle was also connected to a facial nerve normally used for chewing to help give it power. The operation to correct the problem cost \$70,000, but Chelsea's parents persuaded their managed health care company, Kaiser Permanente, to pay. "This was not cosmetic surgery," she added. Linda Kwon, a member of the Senate, welcomed the suggestion that new ministers make a declaration of wealth. She described the suggestion as useful and important and said it could be a "decisive deterrent." But Mrs. Sharaf stressed that such declarations should be treated in strict confidentiality as "people will not like personal declarations to be public."

Sri Lankans use pesticides mostly for suicide

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka, which has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, may have agricultural pesticides to blame for it. Health Ministry statistics show that of the total 14,979 people admitted to hospitals in 1994 for treatment of pesticide poisoning, 1,421 died. "A vast majority of them swallowed pesticide intentionally," said Professor Ravindra Fernando, head of the National Poisons Information Centre. "Pesticide poisoning is the third leading cause of death in this country. It certainly contributes to our high suicide rate," Prof. Fernando told Reuters.